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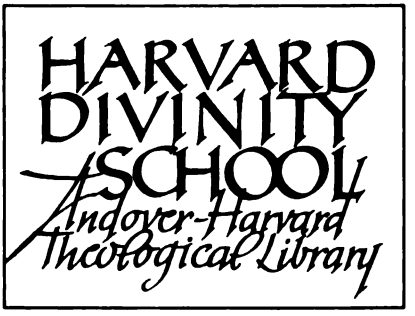
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THE LATE REVEREND

JOHN LOGAN, F. R. S. EDIN.

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF LEITH.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE FOURTH ENGLISH EDITION.

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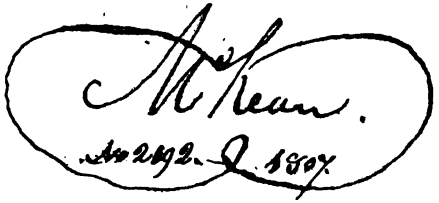

F. H. P. Greenwood
1838 –

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following volume is the work of a man of genius; but as it is a poſthumous publication, and was not prepared by the Author for the preſs, the candid Public will make the proper allowances.

Some of the Sermons are incomplete; owing partly to their having been left in that ſtate by the Author, and partly to the Manuſcript being loſt. But though imperfect, they were thought too valuable to be omitted.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I. Page

Pſalm xxvii. 4. *One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I ſeek after; that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple* 17

SERMON II.

Rom. xii. 11.—*Fervent in ſpirit; ſerving the Lord* 30

SERMON III.

Eccles. xii. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth* 46

SERMON IV.

Coloſs. iv. 5.—*Redeeming the time* 54

SERMON V.

Pſalm iv. 4. *Stand in awe* 72

SERMON VI. Page

Job xxx. 23. *For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the houſe appointed for all living* 84

SERMON VII.

1 Cor. xv. 55. 57. *O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* 93

SERMON VIII.

Pſalm xcvii. 1. *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice* 105

SERMON IX.

Proverbs iv. 18. *The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day* 122

SERMON X.

Matthew v. 5. *Bleſſed are the meek: for they ſhall inherit the earth* 143

SERMON XI.

Iſaiah lviii. 7.—*Deal thy bread to the hungry,—hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh* 152

SERMON XII. Page

Matthew v. 19. *Whoſoever, therefore, ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven* 161

SERMON XIII.

Hebrews xii. 24.—*The blood of ſprinkling, that ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel* 172

SERMON XIV.

Mark viii. 36. *For what ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?* 182

SERMON XV.

Pſalm xliii. 4. *I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy* 191

SERMON XVI.

Luke ii. 10.—*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.*— 204

SERMON XVII.

Acts xvii. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent* 225

SERMON XVIII. Page

2 Cor. vi. 2.---*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of ſalvation* 245

SERMON XIX.

Luke xv. 18. *I will ariſe and go to my father.* 257

SERMON XX.

1 Cor. ii. 12. *Now we have received not the ſpirit of the world, but the ſpirit which is of God* 266

SERMON XXI.

Luke xi. 13---*How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* 275

SERMON XXII.

Iſa. xxvi 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and ſhut thy doors about thee* 284

SERMON XXIII.

Iſaiah lvii. 21. *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked* 292

SERMON XXIV.

Pſal. lxxviii. 1. *Give ear, O my people, to my law* 301

SERMON XXV. Page

Rom. v. 7, 8. *For ſcarcely for a righteous man will not one die; yet peradventure for a good man ſome would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us* 308

SERMON XXVI.

Prov. xii. 26. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour* 316

SERMON XXVII.

Daniel xi. 32. *The people that do know their God ſhall be ſtrong* 321

SERMON XXVIII.

Exod. xxiii. 2. *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil* 327

SERMON XXIX.

Pſal. cxxii. 6. *Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem* 335

SERMON XXX.

Heb. ix. 27.—*It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment* 343

SERMON XXXI.

Mat. xi. 30. *My yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light* 356

SERMON XXXII. Page

Heb. ii. 10. *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the Captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings* 365

SERMON XXXIII.

Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* 376

SERMON XXXIV.

John xix. 30.——*It is finiſhed.*—— 388

SERMON XXXV.

John xi. 25. *I am the reſurrection and the life* 405

LECTURE I.

Pſal. i. 1.—6. *Bleſſed is the man, &c.* 419

LECTURE II.

Pſal. xxiv. 1.—7. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof, &c.* 431

LECTURE III.

Luke xvi. 19.—31 *There was a certain rich man, &c.* 441

LECTURE IV.

Page

Matthew xxv. 1.---10. *Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, &c.* 452

LECTURE V.

Luke ix. 28.---36. *And it came to paſs about an eight days after theſe ſayings, he took Peter, &c.* 462

Celebration *of the* Sacrament *of the* LORD's SUPPER.

ACTION SERMON.

Luke xxii. 44. *And being in an agony* 471

EVENING SERMON.

Matthew xxviii. 6.---*Come, ſee the place where the Lord lay* 486

SERMON I.

PSAL. xxvii. 4.

One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I ſeek after; that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

DAVID, the author of this pſalm, is much celebrated in the ſacred Scriptures. As a man, he was not without faults; but as a king, he ſhines with uncommon luſtre. He diſtinguiſhed himſelf in early youth, as the champion of his native land; in fighting the battles of Iſrael he became the hero of his age; and at laſt he aſcended the throne, on which he ſat with much ſplendour during many years. He was the founder of the Jewiſh monarchy. From being ſeparate tribes, he made the Jews a nation. Their judge in peace, as well as their leader in war, he ſecured by his councils what he had gained by his arms, and gave to Judea a name and a renown among the kingdoms of the Eaſt. To the bravery of a warrior, and the wiſdom of a ſtateſman, he added what in all ages has been no leſs admired, the accompliſhments of a poet or bard. "The ſweet "Pſalmiſt of Iſrael" conſecrated his harp to the praiſes of the Lord, and compoſed to it ſacred ſtrains, that have miniſtered to the improvement and to the devotion of ſucceeding times, till this day.

Notwithſtanding all his other engagements, he found time for the exerciſes of religion; notwithſtanding all the pleaſures and honors of a throne, he found his chief happineſs in the houſe of the Lord. "One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I "ſeek after, that I may dwell in the houſe of the "Lord all the days of my life." Whenever his favourite ſubject preſents itſelf, he takes fire, and ſpeaks of it, not only with zeal, but with tranſport. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hoſts! "My ſoul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts "of the Lord: my heart and my fleſh cry out for "the living God."

It becomes then a ſubject worthy of our attention, to inquire, *What there is* in the public inſtitutions of religion, to have rendered them an object of ſo great importance to the king of Iſrael? This will appear, if we conſider their influence on men, with reſpect to their religious capacity; with reſpect to their moral character; with reſpect to their political ſtate; and with reſpect to their domeſtic life.

In the *firſt* place, let us conſider the influence of religious inſtitutions upon men, with reſpect to their *religious capacity*.

There are many qualities which we ſhare in common with the inferior animals. In the acuteneſs of the external ſenſes, ſome of them excel our ſpecies. They have a reaſon of their own; they make approaches to human intelligence, and are led by an inſtinct of nature to aſſociate with one another. They have alſo their virtues, and exhibit ſuch examples of affection, of induſtry, and of courage, as give leſſons to mankind. But in all their actions they diſcover no

ſenſe of Deity, and no traces of religion. It was reſerved to be the glory of man, that he alone ſhould be admitted into the preſence of his Creator, and be rendered capable of knowing and adoring the perfections of the Almighty. As piety is the diſtinguiſhing mark of the human race, a tendency to the exerciſe thereof is in ſome degree natural to the mind. When we look up to heaven, and behold the ſun ſhining in glory, or the moon and the ſtars walking in brightneſs, untaught nature prompts us to adore him that made them, to bow down and worſhip in the temple not made with hands. When we are ſurrounded by dangers on every ſide, and overwhelmed with deep affliction, by the law of our nature we tend to ſome ſuperior Being for ſafety and relief: or when we are ſurpriſed with a ſudden flow of unexpected proſperity, ſpontaneouſly we lift up our eyes and hands to heaven, to pour forth the grateful effuſions of the heart to our unſeen Benefactor.

As there are principles, then, in human nature, which incline men to religion, and principles alſo which incline them to ſociety, it would not have been extraordinary, if the combined influence of the religious and aſſociating principles had been ſo ſtrong as to have prompted men to have aſſembled in public, for the purpoſes of devotion, although no law had been given to that end. But it was not left to this. Among all the nations of the world, the public intereſted itſelf in the cauſe; the legiſlative authority interpoſed its ſanction, and kings and lawgivers encouraged the propenſity of the people to religion. It required no profound wiſdom to foreſee the mani-

fold advantages that the public worſhip of a Deity would introduce among men. Accordingly temples were every where built, ſacred ceremonies were inſtituted, an order of men was appointed to officiate in holy things, and certain days were ſet apart for the people to join in the celebration of divine worſhip. Indeed, as to the objects, and the manner of worſhip, little care was taken. The magiſtrate gave his authority to the current belief, though ever ſo abſurd and ridiculous, and eſtabliſhed that form of religion which the people were beſt diſpoſed to receive. It was thought ſufficient, if by public and ſolemn acts of piety, a ſenſe of Deity, and feelings of religion, could be impreſſed, and frequently renewed in the minds of men. But in ſome nations this practice, ſo highly beneficial to mankind, was enjoined by an authority ſuperior to that of human governors. God himſelf, in the ſyſtem of laws which he delivered to his ancient people, hallowed the ſeventh day, and appointed other feſtivals in which the people ſhould aſſemble together in order to join in the ſervices of the ſanctuary. In what concerns the celebration of the Sabbath, Chriſtianity confirms the Moſaic law. Our Saviour, whoſe practice ought to be a rule of life to Chriſtians, attended upon the public worſhip in the Jewiſh ſynagogues; and the Apoſtles followed his example, till by their labours in the miniſtry, they had gathered together in one place, a ſufficient number of converts to form a church. Then they conſtituted regular aſſemblies of Chriſtians, they ordained proper perſons to preſide in the public worſhip, and both by their precept and example, recommended a conſtant attendance on theſe meetings of the faithful.

That there muſt be an eſtabliſhed religion in every ſtate, is a principle in which not only Chriſtians, but infidels, have been agreed. In order that the public religion may be productive of any good effects, it is neceſſary that it make a deep impreſſion upon the minds of the people. But if it were not for our aſſembling together on the Lord's day, for public worſhip, that form of Chriſtianity which is eſtabliſhed in this country would perhaps take too feeble a hold of the mind, to produce its proper effects. The Chriſtian religion is very different from thoſe ſyſtems of ſuperſtition which prevailed in the Pagan world. The Heathen religion had attractions for every feeling of the human frame. It contained every thing that could ſtrike the ſenſes, or pleaſe the imaginations of men. All the apparatus of falſe religion, which at once amuſes and engages the mind, was exhibited: ceremonies, pompous feſtivals, coſtly ſacrifices, were continually paſſing before the eyes of the worſhipper. In the majeſty of the temple, and the ſplendour of the worſhip, the Deity ſeemed to be preſent. Ancient ſuperſtition introduced the fine arts into her train, called the powers of genius to her aid, and employed the painter and the poet to hold out her charms to the world.

Very different was that religion of which Jeſus Chriſt was the author. When the Son of God deſcended, he appeared not like the idols of the nations. The Chriſtian religion is pure, ſpiritual, divine. It is the religion of the mind and the heart; the worſhip of God, who is a ſpirit, in ſpirit and in truth. There is nothing here but the ſimplicity of truth and the majeſty of reaſon to perſuade the world. Man,

however, is not a pure intelligence, and reaſon is not the only attribute of his nature. Were it not therefore for the mode of communication by diſcourſe in public aſſemblies, Chriſtianity, in its ſimpleſt form, could never be a popular religion. It might employ the leiſure of philoſophic men; it might operate its effect upon the few who are given to inquiry; but it never could engage the generality of mankind. They, who have not conſidered the ſubject, cannot poſſibly conceive the aſtoniſhing difference there is between written and ſpoken language; between the dead letter that appears to the eye, and the living voice that comes to the heart. The ſame diſcourſe that in a popular aſſembly would raiſe the paſſions of the audience to the higheſt pitch; ſend it abroad in print, and it will often have no effect at all. Add to theſe, that it is to the meetings of the faithful, that the promiſe of the divine preſence is made. In the gates of Zion, God delights to dwell; and when his diſciples are gathered together, Jeſus has promiſed to be in the midſt of them. True piety indeed is not confined to the ſanctuary. High is the pleaſure, and great the benefit of private devotion. But ſure I am, that they who have entered into the ſpirit, and taſted the pleaſures, of devotion in ſecret, will not be thereby prevented from approaching to God in the ordinances of public worſhip. Society heightens every feeling, and improves every delight. All that charms the eye or the ear, or the imagination or the heart, is attended with double pleaſure, when we ſhare it in the company of others. In the preſence of ſtriking and exemplary piety, the careleſs worſhipper will become devout, and the de-

vout will become fervent. A holy emulation will riſe in the boſoms of the faithful: the ardour will ſpread from breaſt to breaſt, and the paſſions of one inflame the paſſions of all. May I not appeal to your own experience, and aſk, When you have been in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when the word of life was ſpoken from the heart to the heart, have you not felt that there was a divinity in virtue, have you not found yourſelves as if tranſlated from earth to heaven, and experienced the emotion of mind which the Patriarch felt, when he awoke from his dream, and cried out in rapture, "Surely the Lord is in "this place! This is none other than the houſe of "God, and this is the gate of heaven?"

Secondly, Let us view the effect of religious inſtitutions upon men, with regard to their *moral character*.

Whatever brings men together, and connects them in ſociety, has a tendency to civilize and improve them. Eſpecially when they aſſemble together for ſuch important purpoſes as the worſhip of a Deity, this will be the effect. There is ſomething in the very idea of drawing nigh to God, that inſpires virtue. When men accuſtomed to meet together as buſy and as ſocial creatures, aſſemble at ſtated times as rational and immortal beings, a ſenſe of propriety will prompt them to act up to that high character. When the ſons of God come to preſent themſelves before the Lord, whatever is diſpleaſing to God, and hoſtile to men, will vaniſh from their mind. The connection between ſuch exerciſes of piety, and the practice of virtue, is nearer and more intimate than ſuperficial reaſoners are apt to imagine. There are

indeed pretences to religion, without any virtue, as there are pretences to virtue without any religion; but whoever in reality poſſeſſes the fear of God, will be thereby determined to keep his commandments. It muſt be obvious at firſt view, that the ſenſe of a Supreme Being, the inſpector of human affairs, the patron of virtue, the avenger of ſin, and the rewarder of righteouſneſs, has a powerful tendency to ſtrengthen moral obligation, to annex a new ſanction to the laws, and to inſpire purity into the manners of a people.

By the operation of ſuch a principle, open violence will be reſtrained, and ſecret enmity will be checked. Society will aſſume a happier form, the inſolence of the oppreſſor will be humbled, and the wild paſſions of the licentious be ſubdued. What the Scripture calls, "the power of the world to come," is felt ſtrongly through every corner of this world. Heaven improves the earth, and the life which is to come, is a ſource of happineſs to the life which now is. There are, indeed, I acknowledge, to the honor of the human kind, there are perſons in the world who feel that the poſſeſſion of good diſpoſitions is their beſt reward, who would follow goodneſs for its own ſake, and do their duty, becauſe it is their duty, although there were neither rewards nor puniſhments to come. But I know as well, that the world is not compoſed of ſuch perſons. Men in general are governed by their paſſions, their intereſt, the prevailing bias of their minds; and whenever their paſſions, their intereſt, or the bias of their mind, ſtand in one ſcale, and their duty in the other, it is very evident where the balance will incline. To ſuch perſons you might

declaim for ever to no purpoſe, on the beauty of virtue, and the harmony of a well governed mind; they hear you not; they are deaf to the voice of the moral charmer: nothing leſs than "Thus ſaith the "Lord," will influence their conduct. The unjuſt judge in the parable repreſents and characterizes the great body of mankind; if they fear not God, neither will they regard men.

Thus, if the public inſtitutions of religion were laid aſide, private virtue would not long remain behind. Men in general have no principle of moral conduct but religion, and if that were taken away, they would work all impurity with greedineſs, whenever they could withdraw from the public eye. Human laws would often be of little avail, without a ſenſe of divine legiſlation; and the ſanctions of men have little force, unleſs they were enforced by the authority of God. There would then be no ſecurity for the public peace; the mutual confidence between man and man would be deſtroyed; the bond which keeps ſociety together would be broken; oaths would become mere words of courſe, and an appeal to the Great God of Heaven, no more regarded, than if he were an image of ſtone. Human life would be thrown into confuſion, the ſafety of mankind would be endangered, and the moral world totter to its ruin, if ſuch a pillar were to fall. And what is it that maintains and ſpreads religious principles in the world? What is it that keeps alive on the minds of the people, the fear of God and the belief of his providence? It is the public inſtitutions of religion; it is the obſervance of the Lord's day; it is our aſſembling together in this place, for the celebration of divine wor-

ſhip. The people, in general, have no religious principles, and no rule of life, but what they learn here; and if theſe churches were once ſhut up, the hand of the civil magiſtrate would ſoon force them open, in order to reclaim the criminals that would thus be let looſe upon the world.

In the *third* place, let us view the effect of religious inſtitutions upon men, with regard to their *political ſtate.*

The political ſyſtems that take place in the world, the facility with which the many are governed by the few, is one of the moſt wonderful things in the hiſtory of man. That mankind in all ages, and in all countries, ſhould allow a few of their number to divide this globe among them; to appropriate to themſelves the poſſeſſions, diſtinctions and honors, and leave nothing to the majority but burdens to bear, if we had not beheld it from the firſt, would have appeared one of the moſt aſtoniſhing of all events. Would it be at all ſurpriſing to hear a man ſtruck with a ſenſe of this ſtate of things, complain thus: "Is nature unequal in the care of her chil-
"dren? A mother to ſome, and a ſtepmother to oth-
"ers? Has ſhe appointed me to labour in the ſweat
"of my brow, and another to riot in the fruit of my
"labours? No. The fault is not in nature. She
"has no favourites. She gives to all her ſons an
"equal right to inherit the earth. The fault is in
"them who tamely bend their necks to the yoke,
"who kneel and kiſs the rod which the haughty
"lord waves over their heads. It never ſurely was
"the will of Heaven, that the worthy ſhould be
"ſcorned by the vile, and the brave be trampled up-

"on by the coward. Cannot I then find a band of "men as valiant and as determined as myſelf, to rec- "tify theſe caprices of fortune, to vindicate the rights "of nature, and reſtore mankind to their original in- "heritance? By doing violence at firſt, this uſurpa- "tion on nature was made; and by a ſimilar vio- "lence, nature requires that her reign be reſtored." What is it that prevents ſuch a ſpirit as I have been now deſcribing, from frequently breaking out? What prevents bloodſhed and devaſtation, and all the evils of war? What prevents the world from being turned upſide down? Nothing ſo much as the influence of religious principles upon the minds of men. Chriſtianity gives honor to civil government, as being the ordinance of God, and enjoins ſubjection to the laws, under its own awful ſanctions.

And not only by particular precepts, but by its ſecret and leſs viſible influence, it prepares the minds of men for ſubmiſſion to lawful authority. When we meet together in this place, under the ſanction of law, and under the protection of the civil magiſtrate, we are put in mind of our relation to the ſtate, and of our duty to the higher powers. *Fear God* and *honor the King*, have more than a local connection in Scripture*. Obedience to ſpiritual authority paves the way for ſubjection to the civil power. Hence wiſe legiſlators have, even on this account, favoured the progreſs of religion: hence thoſe who have attempted innovations in government, applied, in the firſt place, to the miniſters of religion, and endeavoured to gain the pulpit on their ſide. Julian, known by the name of the apoſtate, the moſt formidable enemy the Chriſ-

* See 1 Pet. ii. 17.

tians ever had, was ſo ſenſible of the influence and of the effects of preaching to the people, that he appointed a ſimilar inſtitution among the heathens.

"My ſon, fear thou the Lord and the king," (ſaid the wiſeſt of mankind), "and meddle not with them "that are given to change." In confirmation, we may obſerve, that men, characterized as given to change, have either, from infidelity, not attended upon ordinances, or, from enthuſiaſm, been above them: for, who have been innovators and diſturbers? who have been the authors of ſeditions and rebellions? who have been the enemies of order and civil government, in many an age? a mixture of atheiſts and fanatics; two claſſes of men, who though ſeemingly oppoſite, have been found in cloſe bonds of union.

In the *fourth* and *laſt* place, we have to conſider the influence of religious inſtitutions upon men, with reſpect to *domeſtic life*.

It is chiefly on account of their domeſtic ſituation, that we can pronounce men happy or miſerable. Here the pleaſures are enjoyed which ſweeten life; here the pains are felt which imbitter our days. No uneaſineſs abroad will ſit heavy on a man, when the pleaſing reflection riſes in his mind, that he has happineſs at home: no enjoyment from without will give real and laſting ſatisfaction, when he knows that he has a curſe in his own houſe.

It is no ſmall advantage attending the inſtitutions of divine worſhip, that they miniſter to the happineſs of domeſtic life. A new bond will be added to the conjugal union, when thoſe whom it connects walk to the Houſe of God in company, take ſweet coun-

ſel with one another, and ſet out jointly in the way that leads to life. Watered by the dews of Heaven, which fall here, the olive plants will flouriſh round your table. What ſacred ſenſations will fill the boſom of a parent, when, viewing his family ſitting at the feet of Jeſus, he ſays, in the fulneſs of a grateful heart, "Lord! behold me, and the children whom "thou haſt given me!"

There is a beauty, alſo, when the rich and the poor, when the high and the low, who ſeldom meet together on other occaſions, aſſemble here in one place, one great family, in the preſence of their common Lord, when they are ſtripped of every adventitious circumſtance, and where virtue makes the only diſtinction among them. It is the image of thoſe golden times when ſociety began; it is the image of the ſtate which is to come, when God ſhall be all in all.

Such are the effects of religious inſtitutions upon men, with reſpect to their religious capacity, their moral character, their political ſtate, and their domeſtic life.

Whoever, therefore, habitually abſents himſelf from attending on public ordinances, has to anſwer for it to his God, to his neighbours, to his country, and to his family. He partakes with other men in their ſins; he aſſociates with the enemies of mankind; and does what in him lies, to undermine the baſis on which the order and happineſs of civil ſociety is built. He teaches the falſe ſwearer to take the name of God in vain; he directs the midnight robber to his neighbour's houſe; and he delivers into the hand of the aſſaſſin a dagger, to ſhed innocent blood.

But, bleſſed be God! that, corrupted as the world

is, there are not wanting inſtances of exemplary piety, in every ſtation of life; not only in the middle, the lower, and the higher, but in the higheſt of all. While piety ſhines, as it now does, from the Throne; while it has the beam of Majeſty to adorn it; let none of the ſubjects fail in copying the pattern: and while we meet together in this place, let us remember, that many who have worſhipped, in times paſt, within theſe walls, are now in the Higher Houſe, in the Church of the Firſt-born, in the Aſſembly of Angels, and in that Temple where the beatific preſence of the Lord diſplays his glory, in a manner which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

SERMON II.

ROM. xii. 11.

——*Fervent in ſpirit; ſerving the Lord.*

THE manners of mankind are perpetually varying. Two nations differ not more from one another, than the ſame nation differs from itſelf, at different periods of ſociety. This change of cuſtoms and manners has given riſe to two opinions, both of them generally received, and both of them founded on miſtake. Theſe are, that we are always improving upon our anceſtors in art and in ſcience, and always degenerating from them in religion and morals. When we talk of any work of ingenuity or of induſtry, compoſed or performed by our forefathers, from the higheſt liberal ſcience, to the loweſt mechanic art, if we allow it any praiſe at all, our panegyric runs in this ſtyle: "It is very well for "the time in which it was done." On the other hand, we always allow our anceſtors the preference in virtue. For theſe five thouſand years paſt, the philoſophers and moraliſts of every nation have extolled the times of antiquity, and decried the age in which they lived, as the worſt that ever was known. "Theſe wicked times;" "This degenerate age," are phraſes that have rung in the public ear almoſt ſince the general deluge. The ages of antiquity are always ages of gold; the preſent always an age of iron.

The origin of theſe opinions I take to be this. As cuſtoms and manners are perpetually fluctuating, the reigning mode is always reckoned the beſt, becauſe they have no other ſtandard but faſhion. But faſhion is not the ſtandard of morals. The hand of the Almighty hath written the moral law, the ſtandard of virtue, upon the living tablets of every human heart. Here then the ſtandard is fixed and eternal. Accordingly, as quite a different ſet of virtues and vices prevail in one age, from what prevail in another; as we are naturally diſpoſed to bury the faults of our forefathers in oblivion; as we inſenſibly contract a veneration for whatever is great in antiquity; hence ariſes the opinion, that the virtues of a former age are greater than thoſe of a following one. We think we degenerate from our fathers, becauſe we differ from them. But were I to pronounce of the times in which we live, I would ſay that the preſent age is not inferior in virtue to the paſt. We have improved upon our anceſtors in humanity, charity and benevolence; we have exchanged the rage and rancour of animals of prey, for the meek and gentle ſpirit of the dove. The gall of aſps is transformed into the milk of human kindneſs. Great and enormous crimes are leſs frequent than they have been; we are better members of ſociety, better neighbours, better friends than our anceſtors were. People of different opinions and ſects in religion, who ſome hundred years ago would have been putting one another to death, now live together in amity and peace.

Would to God I could carry on my panegyric, and add, that we are more religious and devout than

our anceſtors were, that our zeal for the honor of God, and the intereſts of religion, ſhines with a brighter luſtre, and burns with a purer flame. But alas! my brethren, I muſt here change my ſtrain. Your own eyes, your own hearts, will tell you the diſmal truth. Is it not a deplorable fact, that inſtead of being fervent in ſpirit to ſerve the Lord, an indifference about religion almoſt univerſally prevails? The very face of ſerioufneſs is baniſhed from ſociety, and were it not for this day, on which we aſſemble together to worſhip the God of our fathers, the very form of godlineſs would be exterminated from the earth.

To induce you to the practice of devotion, it is propoſed, in the *firſt* place, To illuſtrate the importance and the advantage of ſerving the Lord; and, in the *ſecond* place, To explain and to enforce, with a few arguments, the duty of ſerving the Lord with fervency of ſpirit.

In the *firſt* place, let us conſider the importance and the advantage of ſerving the Lord.

We are urged to the practice of ſome virtues, by our ſtrong ſenſe of their inviolable obligation; we are allured to the love of others, by the high approbation of their native beauty, which ariſes in every well-diſpoſed mind; we are engaged to the performance of others, by our experience of their utility and influence upon the public good. Piety is equally enforced in all theſe reſpects. Its obligation is indiſpenſable; its beauty is ſupreme, and its utility is univerſal. It is not ſo much a ſingle virtue, as a conſtellation of virtues. Here reverence, gratitude, faith, hope, love, concentre their rays, and ſhine with

united glory. Whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are pure, are honeſt, or of good report; if there be any merit, any praiſe in human action, piety comprehends the whole. There is not a diſpoſition of the mind which is more noble in itſelf, or is attended with greater pleaſure than piety. It is accompanied with ſuch inward ſatisfaction, that the duty is ſufficiently rewarded by the performance; and it hath ſuch true grandeur in it, that when duly performed, it exalts us to a ſtate but little lower than the angels. The moſt illiterate man, under the impreſſions of true devotion, and in the immediate acts of divine worſhip, contracts a greatneſs of mind that raiſes him above his equals. Thereby, ſays an admired ancient, we build a nobler temple to the Deity than creation can preſent.

Piety is adapted to the notions of happineſs and chief good which all men entertain, although theſe notions were as various in themſelves as the theories of philoſophers have been about their object. If we are actuated by the mild and gentle affections, lovers of nature, willing to retire from the buſtle of the world, and to ſteal through the vale of life with as little noiſe, and as much peace as poſſible, religion ſanctifies our choice, and doubles all the joys of life with the peace of heaven. Are we lovers of ſociety, delighting to enlarge the ſphere of our acquaintance in the world, and to cultivate univerſal friendſhip with all ranks and degrees of men? Here too, religion befriends us, as it unites all men under one common intereſt, that of being probationers for eternity. Are we ambitious of fame and honor among men? This is indeed the univerſal paſſion. Nothing more

diſtinguiſhes the nature of man, than this reſtleſs deſire of riſing above his fellows, of becoming famous, and acquiring a name. But it does not lie in the way of every one to riſe in the world, by being advanced to honor and diſtinction, and commanding the applauſe of attending multitudes. Fame unbars the gates of her temple but to a choſen few; the candidate will infallibly meet with many a diſappointment, and many a downfal, in climbing the ſteep aſcent; but the paths of religion, that lead to glory, honor and immortality, are ever open and ſafe. By piety we already enjoy a reputation among the juſt, and the approbation of our own hearts, and have the certain expectation of that immortal honor which cometh from God only, who writes our name in the book of life. Hither let the man of the world turn, that he may find durable riches, more to be deſired than gold and all earthly poſſeſſions. Here the man of pleaſure may find a perpetual fund of enjoyment, in drinking of that ſtream which proceeds from the river of life; a ſtream whoſe fountain never fails, which has no ſediment at bottom, and which runs for ever unmingled with the waters of bitterneſs.

Piety is the foundation of virtue and morality. True devotion ſtrengthens our obligations to a holy life, and ſuperadds a new motive to every ſocial and civil duty. Upon an impartial obſervation of mankind, it will be found, that thoſe men who are the moſt conſcientious in the public and private exerciſes of divine worſhip, will be moſt diligent in performing the duties they owe to their neighbour, and in obſerving the rules of morality. Our holy religion lays us under ſtrong obligations to duty; the ſpirit

of Chriſtianity dwelling in the heart, muſt of neceſſity inſpire it with an ardent deſire to perform whatever things are virtuous and praiſe-worthy; and the example of Jeſus Chriſt, which the true Chriſtian ſets continually before his eyes, will engage him by all the laws of love, to walk as he alſo walked, who, according even to the teſtimony of his enemies, "did "all things well." On the other hand, impiety and immorality naturally go together, as cauſe and effect. Who is it that is altogether corrupt, and a worker of iniquity? It is the fool, who hath ſaid in his heart there is no God. When we read of the unjuſt judge in the Goſpel, who feared not God, we naturally infer that he regarded not man. Under this particular, we may likewiſe take notice, that ſerving the Lord with ſincere piety, is the moſt ſucceſsful method of becoming publicly uſeful in the world. Man, fallen as he certainly is, is ſtill a benevolent being. Formed for ſociety, he delights in the exerciſe of his ſocial qualities; he aſpires to be eminently uſeful in the ſtation in which he is placed, and is in his proper element, when he is diſpenſing happineſs around him. The ſympathetic emotions that riſe in the boſom at the ſight of an object in diſtreſs, the ſmile that wakens on the cheek, the tear that ſtarts ſpontaneous from the eye, at the repreſentation of ſcenes of human joy or ſorrow, are indiſputable indications of the benevolence of our nature. But the low ſtation of many checks the benevolence of their hearts, and circumſcribes it to a narrow ſphere. Few have it in their power to become uſeful to their country, by contriving or effectuating public-ſpirited deſigns; few have it in their power to ſave their

country from the miſeries of war, by being its ſhield in the day of battle; few can act as the inſtruments of Providence, in bringing about national happineſs. But all of us can be pious; and by ſerving the Lord with fervency of ſpirit, can become univerſally uſeful to our country and to the world. By piety, like the Prophets of old, we can ſhield our country from the wrath of heaven; we can intereſt Omnipotence on its ſide, and even derive bleſſings to ages unborn. A good man is the guardian angel of his country.

I ſhall only add on this head, that by ſerving the Lord here, we have an earneſt and anticipation of the happineſs of the heavenly ſtate. It is a pleaſant reflection, and well worthy of our moſt ſerious thought, that we are now entering upon a courſe of life that will be our employment through eternity. As man is a progreſſive being, gradually tending to perfection, it is a law of his nature, that he ſhould endeavour to act, beforehand, the part to which he is deſtined in a higher ſtate of being. The child, from his earlieſt years, anticipates in ſport the employment of maturer age, loves to imitate the actions of men, and is pleaſed with the name. We are all of us children, with reſpect to our future exiſtence; and ſhould it not be as natural for him who is born from above, to act over the exerciſes and enjoyments of that ſtate of being to which he is advancing? Piety is the beginning of heaven in the mind: here the ſun faintly beams, as in the dubious twilight; there he ſhines forth in full meridian glory. What an ineſtimable privilege then is this, which God hath put into our power? A life ſacred to piety, and to the obſervance of true and undefiled religion, intro-

duces us beforehand into the world to come, and gives us an acquaintance with the ſtate and ſociety of the angels and bleſſed ſpirits who dwell in light.

I come now to the *ſecond* thing propoſed, which was, To explain that fervour of ſpirit ſo requiſite in the exerciſes of devotion, and enforce it with a few arguments.

By fervour of ſpirit, in general, is meant an uncommon application of mind in the performance of any thing, a warmth bordering upon tranſport, that moves every ſpring of the heart, and carries all before it, to gain its end. So that by a fervency of ſpirit in ſerving the Lord, muſt be underſtood, an ardent and active deſire of loving the Lord, of worſhipping him in ſincerity, and obeying his commands with all our heart, with all our ſoul, with all our mind, and with all our ſtrength. It conſiſts not in a few tranſient fits and ſtarts of natural devotion, when we are in jeopardy, without help of man; neither is it a wild blaze of religious paſſion, that flaſhes and vaniſhes. Much leſs ſhall it be profaned by confounding it with thoſe furies, *Enthuſiaſm* and *Superſtition*, who would drench a country with innocent blood, under pretence of ſerving the Lord. "Curſed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, "for it is cruel. O my ſoul, enter not thou into "their ſecret."

True fervour of ſpirit proceedeth from above. It is a beam from the Father of lights, pure and benign, which at once enlightens and warms the mind. It is a ray from the Sun of Righteouſneſs, bright even at the beginning, and which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is a temper wrought into the

heart by the Holy Spirit, compounded of love to God, and of zeal for his honor, attended with charity to man.

This fervour of mind, in its full extent, is one of the brighteſt ornaments of the Chriſtian. It enters into the heart, and engages the whole man on the ſide of devotion; it gives a double meaſure of force and alacrity to that religion which before was ſincere. In a word, it is to the ſpiritual life, what health is to the natural; it makes that ſpirited and cheerful, which otherwiſe would only breathe and move. Conſcious that religion is his grand concern, the fervent Chriſtian will ſet about the duties of it with ſuitable ardour and intenſeneſs of mind. The paſſions and affections which God hath given man, as the ſprings of action, will in him be exerted to their nobleſt purpoſe, to inſpire him with alacrity and cheerfulneſs in the ways of the Lord. He will be in pain till he has performed his duties of devotion, and labours of love, holding nothing too dear, which will procure to him that robe of holineſs, which is beautiful in the eyes of heaven. He feels in his heart all the devout affections and deſires ſo paſſionately deſcribed by the holy Pſalmiſt, which we know not whether to admire moſt as beautiful ſtrains of poetry, or raptures of devotion. "As the hart panteth after the water-"brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God. "My ſoul thirſteth for God, yea, the living God: "when ſhall I come and appear before God? How "amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hoſts! My "ſoul longeth, yea fainteth, for the courts of the "Lord. For, a day in thy courts is better than a "thouſand. The deſire of my ſoul is to thee, O

" God, and to the remembrance of thy name. With " my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night, yea, with " my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early. My " ſoul waiteth for thee, O Lord, more than they that " watch for the morning; yea, more than they that " watch for the morning."

To engage us more effectually to the performance of this part of our duty, let us conſider the general obligations we lie under, as rational creatures, to ſerve the Lord with fervency of ſpirit, and then the particular obligations that ariſe from Chriſtianity.

And, in the *firſt* place, as the Almighty is the Creator of the world, and the Father of the human race, he is likewiſe their Preſerver, and the Author of order and harmony in the univerſe.

In his Providence, he takes us, the children of men, into his particular tuition, in giving us, from his immediate hand, all things requiſite for our ſubſiſtence, well-being and delight in this world, our well-ordered habitation; in making nature ſpontaneouſly unlock to us her hidden ſtores; in cauſing the wide creation, one way or other, to adminiſter to our pleaſures, as if heaven and earth contended which ſhould be moſt liberal of their favours to happy man; and in fine, admitting us, above all the other inhabitants of our earth, into the plan of his creation, and making us ſpectators of that beauty, original and ſupreme, the image of himſelf, which he hath poured forth over all his works.

But when we conſider his particular Providence, with reſpect to every one of us, our obligations will be infinitely heightened. Here we diſcern the finger of God. His goodneſs lent a favourable ear to all

our feeble cries and complaints, when we were upon the breaſt; he guarded us from a thouſand dangers and diſeaſes which hung over our heads, and cut off more than one half of our equals in age. He hath led us, as it were, by the hand through the various ſtages of life, affording us many deliverances, and many tokens of his loving-kindneſs, which only ourſelves and Heaven were privy to; and when all things in the world ſeemed to combine againſt us, he was a friend that never failed. Seeing then he upholds our exiſtence, and is the parent of ſo many mercies, has he not, as our Supreme Benefactor, a title to the ſervice of our whole lives, and to all the fervour of our ſpirits?

This will appear ſtill more, in the *next* place, when we conſider the ſuperior obligations which we are laid under by Chriſtianity. While many nations are ſitting in darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death, on us hath the Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſen, in full glory. We are let into the myſtery kept hid from ages. We have ſeen the Deity, in human form, deſcending upon earth, to teach the benighted nations the knowledge of ſalvation; to ſet a pattern of goodneſs and perfection for the world to imitate; and, by expiating the guilt of ſin upon the croſs, to finiſh our redemption. We have now a new and living way opened into the Heaven of Heavens, by the blood of Jeſus. Life and immortality are brought to light, and promiſed to all who ſincerely believe and obey the goſpel. So that we may now rejoice with the Poet of Iſrael, "As the heaven is high above the "earth, ſo great is the mercy of the Lord towards "us; for as far as the eaſt is from the weſt, ſo far

" hath he removed from us all our iniquities: he " redeemeth our lives from deſtruction, and crown- " eth us with loving-kindneſs and tender mercies."

When we are obliged to any of our fellow-creatures for an important favour, what pleaſure is it to a generous heart, to be able to make the leaſt return! If our benefactor be above us in his ſtation in life, if he beſtowed the favour without any ſolicitation on our part, and promiſes ſtill to continue our friend, ſhall we not take every occaſion of ſhowing that we are not ungrateful, and ſearch for opportunity of ſerving him, as for hid treaſure? What thanks, what praiſes, what ſervices, ſhall we not then render to our Supreme Benefactor, who hath tranſlated us from the kingdom of darkneſs into the kingdom of his Son; who delivered up his Son unto the death for us, and with him freely gives us all things!

We have abundance of ardour and zeal in our temporal concerns. We riſe early, and ſit up late: we deny ourſelves the pleaſures and comforts of ſociety: we forego our native country, and all the dear connections of early life: we traverſe the whole terraqueous globe, expoſe ourſelves to the mercy of winds and waves, and bear alternately the extremities of heat and cold: we breathe in the regions of infection and of death, to amaſs a few pieces of ſhining duſt, whoſe acquiſition coſts us ſuch ſore trouble, and whoſe poſſeſſion gives us ſo little happineſs. Almighty God! ſhall we be thus fervent and zealous in every temporal, in every trivial concern, and remain cold and dead unto thee! If thus we continue, my brethren, the very heathens, iſſuing forth from their regions of darkneſs, will ſet up a

tribunal, and call us before them. "The men of "Nineveh ſhall riſe up in judgment with us, and ſhall "condemn us; becauſe they repented at the preach- "ing of Jonas, and behold a greater than Jonas is "here! The Queen of the South ſhall riſe up in "judgment with us, and ſhall condemn us; for ſhe "came from the uttermoſt parts of the earth, to "hear the wiſdom of Solomon, and behold a great- "er than Solomon is here!"—"Verily, it ſhall be "more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomor- "rha, in the day of judgment, than for our city."

Do ye conſider, my brethren, the dignity and importance of that religion, to which your attachment is required? Do ye reflect, that this is the maſterpiece of infinite wiſdom; that here the Almighty made bare his holy arm, and put forth all his ſtrength? The introduction of this religion was the object of all the diſpenſations of the Deity upon earth. This is the centre in which terminates every line in the great circle of Providence. If one nation was victorious, and another put under the yoke; if war was commiſſioned to ravage and lay deſolate the earth, or peace to make the joyful inhabitants ſing beneath the vine; if kings were crowned, or were dethroned; if empires roſe or fell, all was preparatory and ſubſervient to this grand event. The monarchies which prevailed in the world, whether Aſſyrian, Perſian, Grecian, or Roman, were erected as introductory to the Meſſiah, whoſe kingdom was to be without bounds, and whoſe reign was to be without end. That great image which the Monarch of the Eaſt beheld in his dream, whoſe head was of gold, whoſe breaſt was of ſilver, whoſe thighs were

of braſs, and whoſe feet were of iron, was ſet up by Providence, to prepare the way for the Stone which was cut out without hands, which was deſtined to ſmite the image, become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. All events, whether proſperous or adverſe, whether malignant or benign, have co-operated towards the advancement of our religion. Saints have eſtabliſhed it, by their lives: martyrs have confirmed it, by their deaths: hypocrites have added ſtrength to it, by their diſſimulation: tyrants have purified it, by their perſecutions: infidels have corroborated it, by their oppoſition: the arrows of its enemies have ſerved for its protection: the reſiſtance which it has met with, from the combined wit and genius and malice of mankind, have brought forth thoſe illuſtrious and immortal defences, which eſtabliſh its truth upon the baſis of demonſtration.

Shall we not, then, reckon ourſelves eternally indebted to the infinite goodneſs of God, and ſtir up all that is within us to bleſs his holy name? ſaying, in the language of true fervour of ſpirit, "We will "praiſe thee, O God! we will praiſe thee with our "whole heart! Our lives ſhall be thy ſacrifice! We "will adore thee in death, and through eternity!"

God, from his throne in heaven, doth not behold an object more noble, and more worthy of his view, than a pious man; a man who, conſcious of the dignity and immortality of his nature, employs himſelf with fervour and zeal, in thoſe devout exerciſes which aſſimilate him to the Divinity; who, meaſuring time by his improvements in devotion and virtue, never loſes a day. He is the favourite of Heaven. The arm of the Almighty is ſtretched out in his behalf.

The Lord loves him, and keeps him as the apple of his eye; he gives his angels charge concerning him, to preſerve him in all his ways, leſt at any time he ſhould daſh his foot againſt a ſtone. He delights to ſpeak his praiſe in the Aſſemblies of his ſaints and angels above: he writes his name in the book of his remembrance, and gives him the honorable title of the friend of God. He makes all things work together for his good in this world, and, in the dark vale of death, opens his eyes to diſcern the dawning of heavenly day. In fine, he holds his very aſhes ſacred; and, raiſing him up at the laſt day, carries him to his throne in heaven above, with the glorious company of the redeemed, to be made partaker of his own happineſs.

Theſe are thy palms, O Piety! Thine is the kingdom prepared above, thine the power with God and with man, and thine the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

SERMON III.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

WHEN Solomon, in early youth, had aſcended the throne of Iſrael, the God of his fathers appeared to him in a dream. The Almighty was graciouſly pleaſed to condeſcend thus to viſit his creature. He put in his offer all the pleaſures of the world, and deſired him to aſk, and he ſhould receive; to wiſh, and he ſhould enjoy. The young king poſſeſſed a wiſdom beyond his years, and a greatneſs above his crown. He did not aſk to have his palace filled with the beauties of the eaſt, to have his treaſury ſtored with the gold of Ophir, or to wear the laurel of victory over the nations. He aſked a greater boon than all theſe. "Give thy ſervant, O "Lord," replied the wiſe prince, "Give thy ſervant "wiſdom and underſtanding." What he then made the object of his own choice, he recommends to you under another name, in the words of the text. "Re- "member now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

This is the laſt chapter of the works of Solomon, and theſe words may be regarded as his dying advice to the young. The philoſophers of antiquity, who held out the lamp of wiſdom to the heathen world, gave the ſame advice to their followers. But between them and Solomon, there is this remarkable difference. They, from the obſcure retirement of

the ſchools, declaimed againſt pleaſures which they had never taſted, and affected to deſpiſe honors to which they never had it in their power to aſcend. But Solomon, a great and powerful prince, in the pleaſurable time of life, had in his own perſon tried the experiment. He made the tour of the ſenſual world. He went in queſt of happineſs through all the ſcenes of life. He extended his ſearch over the broad and flowery way, as well as in the narrow path, as it ſhould ſeem by a particular permiſſion of Providence, to ſave the pains of future inquirers. Solomon acted the libertine upon a principle of inquiry. The reſult of his reſearches was, that all unlawful purſuits began with vanity, and ended in vexation of ſpirit, and that the true happineſs of man, conſiſted in that underſtanding which teacheth us to depart from evil, and in that wiſdom which inſtructeth us to fear the Lord.

It is common in Scripture, to expreſs all the acts of devotion and virtue by ſome part or principle of religion, ſometimes by wiſdom and underſtanding; at other times, by faith, love, the fear of God, walking with God, and many other phraſes; all of which expreſs the ſame meaning, and denote the whole economy of a religious life. So that remembering our Creator in the days of our youth, implies an early and an entire dedication of ourſelves to the ſervice of God.

In further diſcourſing upon theſe words, I ſhall enforce the exhortation in the text, and endeavour to perſuade you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, from the peculiar ſuitableneſs of religion to the early period of life. And in the *firſt*

place, let me exhort you now in the days of youth, to remember your Creator, from your being as yet uncorrupted by the world.

Although both Scripture and experience teſtify that man is fallen, and that our nature is corrupted, yet it is equally certain that our earlieſt paſſions are on the ſide of virtue, and that the good ſeed ſprings before the tares. Malice and envy are yet ſtrangers to your boſom. Covetouſneſs, that root of evil, hath not yet ſprung up in your heart; the ſelfiſh, the wrathful, and the licentious paſſions, have not yet obtained dominion over you. The modeſty of nature, the great guardian of virtue, is not ſeduced from its poſt. You would bluſh even in ſecret, to do a deed of diſhoneſty and ſhame. High ſentiments of honor and of probity expand the ſoul. The colour comes into the cheek at the ſmalleſt apprehenſion of blame; the ready lightning kindles in the eye at the leaſt appearance of treachery and falſehood. Hence ſays our Lord to his followers, Unleſs you become as a child; unleſs you aſſume the candour, the innocence and the purity of children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Therefore, whilſt you are yet an offering fit for Heaven, preſent yourſelves at his altar, devote yourſelves to his ſervice. How beautiful and becoming does it appear for young perſons, newly arrived in this city of God, to remember the end for which they were ſent into it, and to devote to their Maker's ſervice, the firſt and the beſt of their days? When they are in the prime of youth and of health, when the mind is untainted with actual guilt, and alive to every generous impreſſion, to conſecrate to religion the vernal flower of

life? The virgin innocence of the mind is a ſacrifice more acceptable to the Almighty, than if we ſhould come before him with the cattle upon a thouſand hills, and with ten thouſand rivers of oil. If there be joy in heaven over a great and aged ſinner that repenteth, how pleaſing a ſpectacle will it be to God, to angels, and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, to behold a perſon in the critical ſeaſon of life, acquit himſelf glorioufly, and, deſpiſing the allurements, the deceitful and tranſitory pleaſures of ſin, chooſe for himſelf that better part which ſhall never be taken away!

Dare then, O young man, to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; have the courage to be good betimes. Beware of falling into the uſual ſnare of the inexperienced; beware of thinking that you have time enough to be religious, and for that reaſon may defer the work of your ſalvation to maturer age, when, as you fooliſhly imagine, ſerioufneſs and ſanctity will come of their own accord. In anſwer to this, let me aſk you, my friends, How often have you obſerved time reform any one? Did time reform Saul? Did time reform Ahab? Did time reform Jezebel? On the contrary, did they not grow bolder in wickedneſs? You generally, indeed, obſerve a greater decency in maturer age. The ebullition of youth is then ſpent, its turbulence is over; but, too often, I am afraid, the wild paſſions have only given place to an external ſobriety, whilſt the heart is as far from God, and as carnal as ever. If you ſuſpect this to be a haſty deciſion, examine what paſſes in the world. Do you not obſerve great part of men in the decline of life, as earthly-minded as be-

fore? The paſſion for pleaſure has indeed abated, but the love of lucre, the moſt ſordid of all paſſions, hath come into its place. If ſuch perſons have any regret for their paſt life, it is only becauſe it *is paſt.* Even then, they look with envy upon the gay and the flouriſhing ſtate of the young. With what joy and triumph do they talk over the exceſſes of their early days, and ſeem to renew their age in the contemplation of their youthful follies? Alas, my friends, Is not God the Lord of all your time? Is there one of your days which doth not pertain to him? Why would you then take the flower of life, and make it an offering to the enemy of ſouls? Is your time too long, to be all employed in the ſervice of God? Is the prime of your days too precious, to be devoted to Heaven? And will you only reſerve to your Maker the refuſe of life; the leavings of the world and the fleſh? If you would ſpeak it out, the language of your heart is this; that whilſt you are good for any thing, you will mind the world and its pleaſures; that you will crown yourſelves with roſebuds, before they are withered, and let no flower of the ſpring paſs away; but if at any time the world ſhall forſake you, if your paſſion for pleaſure ſhall have left you, you will then ſeek the comforts of religion. Any part of your time, you think, is good enough for God; you will apply yourſelves to the work of your ſalvation, when you are fit for nothing elſe; and when you cannot make a better of it, you will ſeek the kingdom of Heaven.

Is it thus that ye requite the Lord, O people, fooliſh and unjuſt? Is this your gratitude to your Benefactor? Is this your love to your Father? Is this your

kindneſs to your Friend? Whilſt he now calls upon you in the ſweeteſt language of Heaven, "My ſon "give me thy heart," ought it not to be the natural movement of your heart, to anſwer with the good man of old, "With my ſoul have I deſired thee in the "night; with my ſpirit within me, will I ſeek thee "early;"—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? "and there is none in all the earth whom I deſire be- "ſide thee."

In the *ſecond* place, Let me exhort you to early piety, from the conſideration of thoſe evils which await you in your future days.

Now is your golden age. When the morning of life rejoices over your head, every thing around you puts on a ſmiling appearance. All nature wears a face of beauty, and is animated with a ſpirit of joy. You walk up and down in a new world; you crop the unblown flower, and drink the untaſted ſpring. Full of ſpirit, and high in hope, you ſet out on the journey of life: viſions of bliſs preſent themſelves to view: dreams of joy, with ſweet deluſion, amuſe the vacant mind. You liſten and accord to the ſong of hope, "To-morrow ſhall be as this day, and much "more abundant." But ah! my friends, the flattering ſcene will not laſt. The ſpell is quickly broken, and the enchantment ſoon over. How hideous will life appear, when experience takes off the maſk, and diſcovers the ſad reality! Now thou haſt no wearineſs to clog thy waking hours, and no care to diſturb thy repoſe. But know, child of the earth, that thou art born to trouble, and that care, through every ſubſequent path of life, will haunt thee like a ghoſt. Health now ſparkles in thine eye, the blood flows

pure in thy veins, and thy ſpirits are gay as the morning: but alas! the time will come when diſeaſes, a numerous and a direful train, will aſſail thy life; the time will come, when pale and ghaſtly, and ſtretched on a bed, "chaſtened with pain, and the multitude "of thy bones with ſtrong pain, thou wilt be ready "to chooſe ſtrangling and death rather than life."

You are now happy in your earthly companions. Friendſhip, which in the world is a feeble ſentiment, with you is a ſtrong paſſion. But ſhift the ſcene for a few years, and behold the man of thy right-hand become unto thee as an alien. Behold the friend of thy youth, who was one with thine own ſoul, ſtriving to ſupplant thee, and laying ſnares for thy ruin! I mention not theſe things, my friends, to make you miſerable before the time. God forbid that I ſhould anticipate the evil day, unleſs I could arm you againſt it. Now remember your Creator, conſecrate to him the early period of your days, and the light of his countenance will ſhine upon you through life. Amid all the changes of this fluctuating ſcene, you have a Friend that never fails. Then let the tempeſt beat, and the floods deſcend, you are ſafe and happy under the ſhelter of the Rock of ages.

Thirdly, The ſeaſon of youth devoted to piety, will yield you a comfortable old age.

When the fire and ſpirit of youth are decayed; when ſober age retires from the noiſe and buſtle of a buſy world, and loves to ſpend in peace the tranquil Sabbath of life, what joy will it afford to be able to look back with pleaſure on the actions of other years! Worn out and weary of his pilgrimage, the traveller now entertains himſelf by recalling the times that are

paſt, and recollecting the ſcenes of his early days. In particular, he now loves to recall the period of childhood and of youth, when he wandered up and down, a ſtranger to care and ſorrow, and paſſed his days in innocence. Often does the fond idea recur; often the pleaſant period return. It will add much, my friends, it will add much to the pleaſures of the reflection, if you have it in your power to recall to mind that your early days were not only innocent, but uſeful, and devoted to the ſervice of your Creator. To look back on a life, no ſeaſon of which was ſpent in vain; to number up the days, the months, and the years, ſpent in the ſervice of God, will be inward rapture, only to be felt. This will cauſe the evening of life to ſmile, and make your departure like a ſetting ſun.

I ſhall conclude with one conſideration, which I hope will have weight, and that is, if you ſeek God now in the days of youth, you are certain of ſucceſs. Go out in the morning of youth, and you are ſure to gather the manna of everlaſting life. God himſelf will bend from his throne, and teach your ſpirits to approach unto him. They who ſeek him early ſhall find him, and ſhall be guarded from evil on his holy mountain.

SERMON IV.

COLOSS. iv. 5.

—Redeeming the time.

AMONG thoſe who have their time moſt at their own diſpoſal, there prevails a maxim very different from that which is recommended in the text. The maxim of the world is, to ſpend time in idleneſs and folly, or, to ſpeak in their own language, "to kill time" by diſſipation and amuſement. Life, which appears ſo ſhort upon the whole, is nevertheleſs ſo long in particular parts, that vaſt numbers of men are overſtocked with its days and hours; their time hangs heavy on their hands; they know not how to employ it, or what to make of themſelves. As they have no fund of entertainment within, and for that reaſon, no happineſs at home, they naturally look out for it abroad. Hence every paſtime is greedily ſought after, that can baniſh thought, and ſave them from their own company. Hence places of public entertainment are frequented, parties of pleaſure are formed, plans of diſſipation are concerted, and amuſement, frivolous amuſement, becomes the ſerious occupation of life. Only look around you into the world! Obſerve what policy and contrivance are continually put in practice by men, for pre-engaging every day in the week for one idleneſs or another; for doing nothing, or worſe than nothing, and that with ſo much ingenuity and forecaſt, as

ſcarce to leave an hour upon their hands to reproach them.

Such, my brethren, is the life of what is called the *world*, a repetition of the ſame childiſh conceptions, a perpetual round of the ſame trifling amuſements. If you had been ſent on earth to play the fool; if your pilgrimage through life were merely a jaunt of pleaſure; it would be cruel and injurious to awaken you from the deluſion. But as you profeſs to be Chriſtians, and believe this life to be a ſtate of moral diſcipline and probation for the next, it will be proper and ſeaſonable to warn you of the folly of ſuch a courſe, and to point out a nobler and a happier path, where at once you may ſee the world, and may adorn it; where at once you may improve your time, and enjoy life.

In order to this, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, give you ſome directions for redeeming or improving the time; and, in the *ſecond* place, ſet before you the obligations to the practice of this duty.

We begin with directions for redeeming the time. In the *firſt* place, treaſure up in your memory a ſtore of uſeful knowledge, as a proper foundation of employment to the mind.

It has been the complaint of diſcontented men in all ages, that life is a ſcene of dulneſs, not worth a wiſe man's care, where the ſame things come over and over like a tale that is told, which, however entertaining it may appear when it is new, yet, by frequent repetition, at laſt becomes tedious and inſipid. The conſequence of which has been, that many, viewing the picture in this diſagreeable light, have been inclined to throw off all ſerious concern about their

duty, to give themſelves up to habits of indolence and languor, and to make no other uſe of their time, but to ſtudy how to trifle it away. True it is indeed, that the days of many have thus been ſpent in vain; that their life has been a barren circle, within which they have been enchanted, going round and round, ever in motion, but never making any advances. But although many have made life a dull round of inſignificant actions, yet no man had ever occaſion to make it ſo. It is indeed ſo to the brutes, who ſoon arrive at that pitch of perfection which is allotted to their natures, where they muſt ſtop ſhort without a poſſibility of going farther. Senſe, which is their higheſt power, moves in a narrow ſphere; its objects are few in number, and groſs in kind, and therefore not only come more quickly round, but alſo grow more inſipid at every revolution.

But man is endowed with nobler faculties, and is preſented with nobler objects whereon to exerciſe and employ them. The contemplation of all divine truth to engage his underſtanding; the beauties of the natural and moral world to attract and captivate his affections; the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God, manifeſted in the works of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption, to exalt his admiration, and call forth all his praiſe. What employment can be more worthy of a rational being, or better adapted to the faculties of an immortal ſpirit, than thus to ſearch out the order, the beauty, and the benevolence of nature, to trace the Everlaſting in his works, and to mark the impreſſion of his creating hand, yet recent on a beautiful world? Or if we turn our eyes towards the moral ſyſtem, to obſerve

a higher order of things, and a greater exertion of Divinity, in adjuſting the plan of Providence, in bringing light from darkneſs, and good from evil, in cauſing the moſt unconnected and contrary events to co-operate to one great end, and making all to iſſue in the general good. Here is a noble path for a rational creature to travel in. Whilſt day unto day thus teaches wiſdom, night unto night will increaſe pleaſure. The man who is thus trained up to the admiration of the works of God, and who has taſted the ſpirit of theſe ſublime enjoyments, will not complain of the inſignificance and languor of life. Theſe ſtudies will afford an occupation at all hours. They will make your own thoughts an entertainment to you, and open a fountain of happineſs at home. They will diffuſe ſomewhat of heaven over the mind; they will introduce you beforehand into the ſociety of angels and bleſſed ſpirits above, and already prepare you to bear a part in that beautiful hymn of heaven, "Great and marvellous are thy works, "Lord God Almighty; juſt and true are all thy "ways, thou King of Saints."

Secondly, Have ſome end in view; ſome object to employ the mind, and call forth its latent powers.

In deviſing, or in executing a plan; in engaging in the whirl of active life, the ſoul ſeems to unfold its being, and to enjoy itſelf. Man is not like the ſoil on which he lives, which ſpends its powers in exerciſe, and requires repoſe, in order to recruit its waſted ſtrength, and prepare it for new exertions. Activity is an eſſential attribute of mind. Its faculties exiſt only when they are exerciſed; it gains a new acceſſion of ſtrength from every new exertion,

and the greater acquiſitions it makes, it is enabled to make ſtill greater. It is not a brook formed by the ſhower; it is a living fountain, which is for ever flowing, and yet for ever full. This will account for an obſervation that we have often occaſion to make in life, that none have ſo little leiſure as thoſe who are entirely idle; that none complain ſo much of the want of time as thoſe who have nothing to do. The fact is, they want that energy of ſoul which is requiſite to every exertion, and that habit of activity which applies to every thing. Indolence unmans the faculties; impairs and debilitates the whole intellectual ſyſtem. Thoſe, who, under its influence, become a kind of perpetual ſleepers, degrade themſelves from the honors of their nature, and are dead while they live. A habit of activity is a moſt valuable acquiſition. He who is poſſeſſed of it, is fit for all events, and may be happy in every ſituation. This habit is only to be acquired by purſuing ſome great object that may agitate the mind. Think not that your labour may be ſpent in vain. Nothing is in vain that rouſes the ſoul: nothing in vain that keeps the etherial fire alive and glowing. The proſpect of ſomething coming forward; the pleaſure and the pride which the mind takes in its own action, beget inſenſibly that habit of induſtry which will abide through life.

Thirdly, Set apart fixed and ſtated hours for the important duties of life.

It is the misfortune of great part of men, that they have no fixed plan of acting. They live *extempore*. They act at random. They are always led by inſtantaneous impulſe, and are driven to and fro as inclina-

tion varies. Their life rolls on through a courſe of miſpent time, and unconnected years, and appears upon review, like the path of a cloud in the air, which leaves no trace behind it. It was the cuſtom of the great Alfred, one of the Engliſh kings, to divide the day into three parts, which he meaſured by the burning of tapers. One part he employed in the cares of the government; another part he dedicated to the cultivation of the liberal arts; the third he devoted to religion. It would be happy for you, my brethren, if, in this reſpect, you would imitate ſuch an illuſtrious example. Let, at leaſt, one part of your time be devoted to the ſervice of God. When the morning aſcends from the eaſt, let it be your firſt care to offer up your earlieſt thoughts as incenſe to Heaven; to add your praiſes to the hymns and hoſannas of the angels in light, and ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. When the ſhades of the night fall around you, let it be your conſtant care to implore the pardoning mercy of God for the errors of the paſt day, and to commit yourſelves to the protection of His Providence who ſlumbers not nor ſleeps. In particular, let this day, which is ſacred to the memory of a Saviour's reſurrection from the dead; which is a memorial of the full accompliſhment of our redemption; let this day be ſet apart for holy contemplation on the wonders of redeeming love, on the height and depth and and breadth and length of the love of Jeſus to our race, which paſſeth all underſtanding; which prompted him to forego the glories of his divine nature for a time, to take upon him the robe of humanity, to lead a life of ſorrows upon earth, and to ſuffer a cruel and ignominious, and an accurſed death. Let us

contemplate this amiable and divine love, till we are changed into the ſame image, and feel within ourſelves an earneſt and anticipation of that everlaſting Sabbath of joy which is reſerved for the righteous in the world to come, when time ſhall be no more.

In the *fourth* place, Endeavour to diſtinguiſh your days by ſome good deed.

As thoſe who are intent to amaſs a fortune, attend to ſmall ſums, in like manner, if you would wiſh to improve your time, you muſt take care not to loſe a day. Many are the ways, and frequent the occaſions, which daily preſent themſelves, of adding to your true happineſs, of improving your natures, and promoting the intereſts of ſociety. You have all the world before you where to act, and the whole of human life as a theatre of virtue. Through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, conquer the exceſs of paſſion, correct ſome irregular deſire, and obtain a victory over the vices that war againſt the ſoul. Let your goodneſs extend to ſociety, and ſpread over the land, like the light of the morning. Can there be any employment ſo agreeable to a benevolent mind, and ſo congenial to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, as to aſſuage the boiſterous paſſions, and reconcile the jarring intereſts of men; to open the eye which prejudice has ſhut; to charm down the ſpirit of party, and to unite all your neighbours in one great family of love? Is not the employment god-like; is not the joy divine, to brighten up the face that was overcaſt with ſadneſs; to wipe the tears from the cheek of ſorrow; to turn the voice of mourning into the notes of joy; to make miſery and wo vaniſh before us like darkneſs before the ſun; to refreſh with ſhowers of bleſ-

ſings the dry and barren land wherein no water is, and, co-operating with a beneficent Providence, to watch for the happineſs of the world? Where is there any one ſo deſtitute of the gifts of grace, of nature, and of fortune, as to have no mite to throw into the public treaſury? He who cannot pretend to enlighten or reform the world, may inſtruct his ignorant, or comfort his afflicted neighbour: he who cannot communicate inſtruction, may give alms. If even theſe are not in your power, the gate of heaven is ever open; the throne of grace is ever acceſſible; and by your interceſſion with God, ſociety may reap more benefit, than from the bounty of the opulent, or the labours of the learned. It was thus that Job improved his time, as we learn from his affecting complaint, when he reviewed the days of his proſperity: "O that I were as in months paſt, as in the "days when God preſerved me; as in the days of my "youth, when the candle of the Lord ſhined upon my "head, when the Almighty was yet with me, when "my children were about me; when the ear heard "me, then it bleſſed me, when the eye ſaw me, it "gave witneſs to me, becauſe I delivered the poor "that cried, the fatherleſs, and him that had none "to help him. I was eyes to the blind, feet was I "to the lame: I was a father to the poor, and the "cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out. The "ſtranger did not lodge in the ſtreet; I opened my "doors to the traveller. The loins of the naked "bleſſed me, and were warmed with the fleeces of "my flock. The bleſſing of him that was ready to "periſh came upon me, and I cauſed the widow's "heart to ſing for joy."

In the *laſt* place, Accuſtom yourſelves to frequent ſelf-examination.

Call yourſelves to an account at the cloſe of the day. Inquire what you have been doing; whether you have loſt a day or redeemed the time. Have you learned any uſeful truth? treaſure it up in your heart, as a valuable acquiſition; make it a principle of action, and bring it into life. Have you done a good deed? then enjoy the ſelf-approving hour, and give thanks unto God for the pleaſures of virtue, and the teſtimony of a good conſcience. Have you been led aſtray by temptation, and overtaken in a fault? repent ſincerely of your paſt tranſgreſſion; implore the mercy of God, through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt, and reſolve, through divine grace, to be more guarded in the time to come. Did we, my brethren, thus make a ſtudy of a holy life; were we as much in earneſt about improving the ſoul in piety and virtue, as we are about many trifling concerns, to what high degrees of ſanctity might we aſcend! How pleaſant would it be at the cloſe of any period of time, to look back on a life, no ſeaſon of which was ſpent in vain; to number up the days, the months, the years, that are marked with good deeds; to behold our youth, our manhood, and our age, as ſo many ſtages in our journey to the land of Emanuel? This would inſpire us with that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding. This would cheer the traveller in the decline of his days. His evening would be bright and pleaſant, and his ſun go down in glory. Life thus ſpent would make us triumph in death. Time thus improved would make us rejoice through all eternity.

I have thus given you ſome directions for the proper improvement of time. The ſecond thing propoſed, was to ſet before you the obligations to the practice of this duty, which I ſhall do by conſidering, in the *firſt* place, your nature as men, and, in the *ſecond* place, your expectations as Chriſtians.

In the *firſt* place, Let us conſider our nature as men.

It is a ſtudy full of inſtruction to the curious or the pious mind, to contemplate the appearances in the univerſe, and trace the laws by which it is governed. All nature is buſy and active. Something is ever coming forward in the creation; in the moral world, as well as in the natural, there is a deſign going on. The great purpoſe of nature in our ſyſtem is to diffuſe exiſtence; to multiply all the forms of matter and claſſes of being. Every element is ſtored with inhabitants. Even the loneſieſt deſert is populous, and putrefaction is pregnant with life. Worlds are incloſed in worlds, and ſyſtems of being going on, that eſcape the eye of ſenſe.

Such is the plan of Providence in this inferior world. The order eſtabliſhed at the firſt of time is ſtill advancing. The divine Spirit, who at the beginning moved upon the face of the deep, and turned a chaos into a beautiful world, ſtill continues to move, inform, and actuate the great machine. Nothing in nature is at reſt; all is alive, all is in motion in the great ſyſtem of God. Thou too, O man! art appointed to action. The love of occupation is ſtrongly implanted in thy nature. One way or another, thou muſt be always employed. Wo to the man, who by his own folly is doomed to bear the pains and

penalties of idleneſs. Reſt is the void which mind abhors. An idle man is the moſt miſerable of all the creatures of God. He falls upon a thouſand ſchemes to fill up his hours, and rather than want employment, is contented to lie upon the torture of the mind, while the cards are ſhuffling, or the die is depending. The glory of our nature is founded upon exertions of activity. From the want of them, thoſe in the more affluent ſtations of life, whoſe fortune is made at their birth, ſo often fail in attaining to the higher improvements and honors of their nature. Have you not, on the other hand, ſeen men, when buſineſs rouſed them from their uſual indolence, when great occaſion called them forth, diſcover a ſpirit to which they were ſtrangers before, and diſplay to the world abilities and virtues which ſeemed to be born with the occaſion? While there are ſo many ſplendid objects to allure the mind, why truſt your character to be evolved by accident; why leave your glory in the power of fortune?

This activity is not only the ſource of our excellence, but alſo gives riſe to our greateſt enjoyments. Even the lower claſs of enjoyments, animal pleaſures, are not only conſiſtent with a life of activity, but alſo derive from it additional ſweets. Hours of leiſure, ſuppoſe hours of employment; they alone will reliſh the feaſt, who have felt the fatigues of the chaſe. But mere animal pleaſures are not of themſelves objects for a wiſe or a good man. Unleſs they are under the direction of taſte; unleſs they have the accompaniments of elegance and grace; unleſs they promote friendſhip and ſocial joy; unleſs they come at proper intervals, and have the additional heighten-

ing of being a relief from buſineſs, they ſoon pall upon the appetite, and diſguſt by repetition. Has ſenſuality a charm when thy friend is in danger, or thy country calls to arms? Who liſtens to the voice of the viol, when the trumpet ſounds the alarm of battle? When the mind is ſtruck with the grand and the ſublime of human life, it diſdains inferior things, and, kindling with the occaſion, rejoices to put forth all its ſtrength. Obſtacles in the way only give additional ardour to the purſuit; and the prize appears then the moſt tempting to the view, when the aſcent is arduous, and when the path is marked with blood. Hence that life is choſen, where incentives to action abound; hence ſerious engagements are the preferable objects of purſuit; hence the moſt animating occaſions of life are calls to danger and hardſhip, not invitations to ſafety and eaſe; and hence man himſelf, in his higheſt excellence, is found to pine in the lap of repoſe, and to exult in the midſt of alarms that ſeem to threaten his being. All the faculties of his frame engage him to action: the higher powers of the ſoul, as well as the ſofter feelings of the heart; wiſdom and magnanimity, as well as pity and tenderneſs, carry a manifeſt reference to the arduous career he has to run, the difficulties with which he is deſtined to ſtruggle, and the ſorrows he is appointed to bear. Happineſs to him is an exertion of ſoul. They know not what they ſay, who cry out, "Let "us build tabernacles of reſt." They miſtake very much the nature of man, and go in queſt of felicity to no purpoſe, who ſeek for it in what are called the enjoyments of life; who ſeek for it in a termination of labour and a period of repoſe. It is not in the

calm ſcene; it is in the tempeſt; it is in the whirlwind; it is in the thunder that this Genius reſides. When once you have diſcovered the bias of the mind; when once you have recogniſed your path in life; when once you have found out the object of the ſoul, you will bend to it alone; like an eagle when he has taſted the blood of his prey, who diſdains the objects of his former purſuit, and follows on in his path through the heavens.

Thus have I ſet before you your obligations as men, to make a right uſe of life, and have ſhown you, from the principles of nature alone, without having recourſe to Chriſtianity, that the excellency and the happineſs of man conſiſts in a virtuous courſe of action, and in making a proper improvement of time. Let us now, in the *ſecond* place, take in the conſiderations ſuggeſted by the Chriſtian religion, and ſee what new obligations ariſe from it, to urge us to redeem the time.

It is the doctrine of revelation, then, that the preſent life is a ſtate of probation for the life to come; that we are now training up for an everlaſting exiſtence; and that according to our works here, we ſhall be judged in a future world. According, therefore, as you now ſow, hereafter you ſhall reap. The time is now paſſing that decides your fate for ever. The hours are at this inſtant on the wing, upon which eternity depends. In this view, let me exhort you to look back upon your paſt life. Call your former hours to an account. Aſk them what report they have carried to heaven. Is there any thing in your life, to diſtinguiſh it from mere exiſtence? Do you diſcern any thing but ſhadows in that mirror

which remembrance holds up? Is the book of memory one vaſt blank, or blotted all over? If this be the caſe, and I am afraid it *is* the caſe with a great part of men, *what better* are *ye* than the animals of the field or the foreſt? Like you they ſleep and they wake; like you they eat and they drink; like you they perform the various functions of nature. Alas! my brethren, did Almighty God create you after his own image, that you might ſink that image to the reſemblance of a beaſt? For, what have you done ſince you came into being, to diſtinguiſh yourſelves from the brutes that periſh? Have you glorified God in all your actions? Have you made your calling and election ſure, by a lively faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by repentance from dead works, and by univerſal purity of heart and life? Have you enriched your mind with the treaſures of wiſdom? Have you adorned your life with the beauties of holineſs? Have you laid up many deeds of piety and charity, as a good foundation againſt the time to come? Unleſs you have done theſe things, you have done nothing. You have been blanks in the univerſe. You are as if you had never been. You have been faſt aſleep; nor has your ſleep been the leſs ſound, that you have dreamed you were awake.

I now call upon you to ariſe, or be for ever fallen. It is now high time to awake. Almighty God now calls upon you to finiſh the work which he hath given you to do. Glory and honor and immortality are ſet before you. Up then and be doing, and the Lord ſhall be with thee. With ſuch views of your duty, and upon theſe principles of action, you will never join in the apology which ſome make for

themſelves, that the general tenor of their life is innocent, and that they have at leaſt the negative merit to do no harm. Perhaps this account may be true; but let me aſk ſuch perſons, Have you ever conſidered the parable of the maſter who called his ſervants to account? He delivered talents to each of them, according as he ſaw fit, with this charge, "Occupy till I come." The ſervant who received the one talent, was negligent and ſlothful. He wrapt up his talent in a napkin, and hid it in the earth. He thought he did well, if he ſecured the capital till his Lord's return. But the maſter received the talent with indignation. He caſt the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, and condemned him to weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. The poor wretch was neither a thief nor a murderer. He had not waſted his Lord's goods. He had your plea, he had done no harm. But he was found guilty of idleneſs and ſloth; he received his ſentence, and was condemned to puniſhment. That which is the ground of your ſecurity, could not ſave him from condemnation.

But in good earneſt, Do you no harm? Is it no harm to wander from the cradle to the grave, in a labyrinth of amuſements, either vain or childiſh? Is it no harm to waſte in diſſipation and expenſive pleaſure, that wealth which might have ſaved an honeſt family from beggary and want? Is it no harm to ſquander in one continued round of vanity and folly, thoſe precious hours on which your future happineſs depends? If there be harm in human actions, *this* is harm. It is a criminal negligence which will turn the ſcale of your eternal doom.

To you, my younger friends, this duty recom-

mends itſelf under the moſt intereſting claims. You are now in that period, when time can be improved to the beſt advantage. With you, every hour of life is precious. The miſimprovement of youthful days is more than the loſs of time. It were of little conſequence to throw away a few days from your life; but along with theſe, you cut off the ſubſtantial improvements, the real joys of maturer age. Figure to yourſelves the loſs which the year would ſuſtain, if the ſpring were taken away; ſuch a loſs you ſuſtain. No tears, nor lamentations, nor bitter upbraidings, will ever recall that golden period. The ſtar ſets, to riſe no more; the flood rolls away, never to return.

Your own experience, my aged brethren, will urge the inſtant neceſſity of redeeming the time. Conſider the fate that awaits you ſoon. A few ſteps will bring you to the threſhold of that houſe which is appointed for all living. Man that is born of a woman is of few days. He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he flieth as a ſhadow, and continueth not. By the unalterable law of nature, all things here haſten to an end. An irreſiſtible rapidity hurries every thing to the abyſs of eternity; to that awful abyſs, to which all things go, and from which nothing returns. The great drama of life is perpetually going on. Age ſucceeds to age, and generation to generation. Not long ago, our fathers trod the path which their fathers had trodden before them; we have come into their room, and now ſupply their places. In a little time we muſt reſign to another race, who in their turn alſo ſhall paſs away, and give place to a new generation. The race of men, ſaith a Jewiſh writer, is like the leaves of the

trees. They come forth in the ſpring, and clothe the wood with robes of green. In autumn they wither; they fall; the winter wind ſcatters them on the earth. Another race comes in the ſeaſon, and clothes the foreſt again.

Conſider the world, my friends, as you ſaw it at firſt, and as you ſee it now. You have marked viciſſitude and alteration in all human affairs. You have ſeen changes in almoſt every department of life. You have ſeen new miniſters at the court, new judges on the bench, and new prieſts at the altar of the Lord. You have ſeen different kings upon the throne. You have ſeen peace and war, and war and peace again. How many of your equals in age have you ſurvived? How many younger than you, have you carried to the grave? Year after year hath made a *blank* in the number of your friends. Your own country hath inſenſibly become a *ſtrange* land, and a *new* world hath riſen around you, before you perceived that the old had paſſed away. The ſame fate that hath taken away your friends, awaits you. Even now the decree is gone forth. The king of terrors hath received his commiſſion, and is now on his way. If you have miſemployed your time, that talent which God hath put into your hand; if your life is marked with guilt or folly, how will you anſwer to your own heart at that awful hour? For previous to the general doom, Almighty God hath appointed *a day of judgment* in the *breaſt* of every man. The *laſt* hour is ordained to paſs ſentence on all the reſt. The actions of your former life will there meet you again. How will you then anſwer at the bar of your own heart, when the collected crimes

of a lengthened life, at *one view*, ſhall *flaſh* upon the mind; when the *ghoſts* of your departed hours, of thoſe hours which you have *murdered*, ſhall riſe up in terrible array, and look you in the face? What would you then give for that time which you now throw away? What would the wretch who lies on a bed of agony, extended and groaning, who feels in his heart the poiſoned arrow of death; who, looking back on his paſt life, turns aſide from the view; who, looking forward to futurity, diſcerns no beam of hope to break that utter darkneſs which overwhelms him; what would he then give for thoſe hours which you now deſpiſe, to make his peace with Heaven, and fit him for his paſſage into the world unknown? Remember, my friends, that this is no imaginary caſe; it is a caſe which may ſoon be your own. Be wiſe, therefore, while wiſdom can avail, and ſave yourſelves from the agony of repenting in bitterneſs of ſoul, when all repentance may be in vain.

To ſum up all; my friends, the time is ſhort. We are as gueſts in a ſtrange land, who tarry but one night. We wander up and down in a place of graves. We read the epitaphs upon the tombs of the deceaſed. We ſhed a few tears over the aſhes of the dead; and, in a little time, we need from our ſurviving friends the tears we paid to the memory of our friends departed.

Time is precious. The time is now paſſing that fixes our fate for ever. The hours are, at this inſtant on the wing, which carry along with them your eternal happineſs or eternal miſery.

Time is irrecoverable. The clock is wound up once for all; the hand is advancing, and, in a little time, it ſtrikes your laſt hour.

SERMON V.

PSALM iv. 4.

Stand in awe.—

WHEN the Patriarch Jacob departed from his father's houſe, and entered on that ſtate of pilgrimage, which only terminated with his life, he lighted on a certain place, where he tarried all the night. Agreeably to the ſimplicity of the ancient world, he laid himſelf down to reſt upon the open plain; without any pillow but a ſtone of the field; and without any covering but the curtains of heaven. A ſtranger he was to the elegance and luxury of after times, but he enjoyed pleaſures of a higher kind. The God of his fathers was with him. In the patriarchal ages, before a public revelation was given to the world, the Deity frequently appeared to holy men in dreams, and viſions of the night. Accordingly, Jacob, in his dream, beheld a ladder ſet upon the earth, the top of it reaching unto the heavens, and upon it the angels of God aſcending and deſcending: and behold! the Lord ſtood above, and ſaid, "I am "the Lord God of Abraham, thy father, and the "God of Iſaac; the land whereon thou lieſt, to thee "will I give it, and to thy ſeed; and thy ſeed ſhall "be as the duſt of the earth; thou ſhalt ſpread "abroad to the eaſt and to the weſt; to the ſouth "and to the north, and in thee, and in thy ſeed, ſhall "all the families of the earth be bleſſed."

Did the Patriarch awake in a rapture of joy, when he had been thus ſo highly favoured of the Lord? You ſhall hear: "And Jacob awaked out of his ſleep, "and he ſaid, Surely the Lord is in this place, and "I knew it not: and he was afraid, and ſaid, How "dreadful is this place! This is none other but the "houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Though he had aſcended in the viſions of God, and beheld ſcenes of glory which few are admitted to ſee; though he had received the moſt gracious promiſes of perſonal ſafety, of proſperous increaſe to his deſcendants, and of the Meſſiah who was to ſpring from his race, nevertheleſs an impreſſion of reverence and awe was the laſt which remained upon his mind.

In like manner, my friends, although you have the near proſpect of commemorating the moſt joyful event which ſignalizes the annals of time, yet if, at the approaching ſolemnity, God ſhall be in this place, you will experience that ſtate of mind which the Patriarch was in when he awoke from his dream, and an impreſſion of ſeriouſneſs and awe will keep its hold of your heart. There is a degree of reverence and holy fear which ever attends religion. Even when God manifeſts his mercy, it is, that he may be feared. Hence we are called to ſerve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him with reverence. All objects make an impreſſion upon the mind correſpondent to their own nature. A beautiful object calls forth pleaſing ideas, and excites a gay emotion. A grand object leaves upon the mind an impreſſion of grandeur. In all ſublime ſcenes, there is a mixture of the awful. The view of the ſkies by night; the

moon moving in the brightneſs of her courſe; and the hoſt of heaven in ſilent majeſty performing their eternal rounds, ſtrike an awe and adoration into the mind; we feel divinity preſent; we bow down and worſhip in the temple which the Moſt High God hath built with his hand, and hath filled with his preſence. The preſence of a reſpectable character raiſes a ſimilar impreſſion on the mind; and the man, who ſets the Lord always before him, will feel his heart impreſſed with that mixture of ſerioufneſs and holy fear, which the Pſalmiſt here recommends, when he ſays, "Stand in awe."

In further treating upon this ſubject, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, point out the advantages of this ſeriouſneſs and reverence which we ought to maintain upon our minds; and, in the *ſecond* place, ſhow you the ſuitableneſs of this temper of mind to our preſent ſtate.

The *firſt* thing propoſed, is to point out the advantages of this ſeriouſneſs and reverence which we ought to maintain upon our minds.

The great art of happineſs conſiſts in regulating, with propriety, the various offices of human life. To allow no duty to interfere with another; to prevent devotion from growing auſtere; and to reſtrain enjoyment from being criminal, is the mark of true wiſdom, and of true piety. Every department of life is beautiful in its ſeaſon. There is a time to be cheerful, and a time to be ſerious: an hour for ſolitude, and an hour for ſociety. Providence hath appointed great part of our happineſs to conſiſt in ſociety. We find, in every ſituation of life, that it is not good for us to be alone. Hence, civil ſociety at firſt was inſtituted; hence, attachments are daily

formed; and man is cemented to man by every feeling of nature, and every tie of the heart. But, as we abuſe and corrupt every thing, the bleſſing of ſociety is often turned into a curſe. To innocent cheerfulneſs, a wanton levity ſucceeds, which baniſhes ſober thought, and laughs at every thing that is ſerious. How often, in life, do we meet with the ſons and daughters of folly, whoſe ſole buſineſs is amuſement; whoſe life is one continued ſcene of idleneſs and diſſipation; everlaſting triflers, whoſe volatile minds are perpetually on the wing, as if they had been ſent to this earth merely to play the fool?

Not that I condemn cheerful ſociety and innocent enjoyment. When God gives, let man enjoy. Let us drink from the fountain of joy, when we are ſure there is no poiſon in the cup. But, my brethren, I muſt remind you, that but a narrow interval, often but a ſingle ſtep, lies between enjoyment and exceſs; between the voice of mirth, and the roar of riot; between innocent entertainment, and a looſe and licentious indulgence. Look back on your paſt life, and tell me, O man! when was it that you felt yourſelf moſt ſtrongly inclined to go aſtray? When was it that you found yourſelf ſeduced in thought, to wander from the paths of purity and uprightneſs? Was it not in the hour of levity and indulgence? Did not your heart betray you when your ſpirits were elevated; when you had baniſhed ſober recollection, and delivered yourſelf over to the delirium of exceſſive joy? Here then is the advantage of ſerioufneſs and reverence. It places a guard upon the heart. It keeps the world and its temptations at a due diſtance. It conſecrates the mind in which it reſides, as

with the preſence of the Deity. A heart thus impreſſed with the fear of God will not ſo readily be aſſaulted by the tempter; nor ſo eaſily yield to the temptation. An impure and profane gueſt will hardly venture upon hallowed ground, or dare to violate the ſanctity of a temple. The preſence of a good man is a check upon the turbulence and uproar of the giddy; they are inſpired with a reverence for his character; they feel how awful goodneſs is, and reſtrain themſelves from thoſe indecent levities to which they are accuſtomed. If a regard for man has ſuch influence upon the mind, what may the fear of God be ſuppoſed to have? The man who is poſſeſſed of this holy fear, ſets the Lord always before him. He enters beforehand into heaven, and dwells in the preſence of God. And canſt thou, O man! defile the purity of heaven with the deeds of hell? Dareſt thou violate the law in the preſence of the Lawgiver? Dareſt thou ſin in the very face of thy Maker? Wilt thou make the Judge of all the earth the witneſs of thy wicked actions, the beholder of thy looſe moments? No. In ſuch a preſence thou wilt baniſh all impure thoughts, and all unhallowed affections, like Moſes at the burning buſh, becauſe the place whereon thou ſtandeſt is holy ground.

Thus, of itſelf, this ſerious frame of mind is the guardian and the protector of religion; and it alſo aſſociates with other virtues which belong to the Chriſtian character. Thoſe who are acquainted with the nature of the mind, know the influence and extent of aſſociation upon human life and manners. It is not a ſingle quality that marks and characterizes a man; the virtues and the vices come in a train;

it is the temper of the ſoul which is all in all in the conduct of human life. But to the temper and diſpoſition here recommended, the moſt reſpectable attributes of the mind, and the moſt amiable qualities of the heart, are allied and peculiar.

In the firſt place, this ſerious frame of mind cheriſhes thoſe higher virtues of the ſoul, which, in the emphatic language of the Sacred Scripture, are called "the armour of God." In the ſolemn ſilence of the mind are formed thoſe great reſolutions which decide the fate of men; that magnanimity which riſes ſuperior to the events of life; that fortitude which bears up under the preſſure of affliction; and that Chriſtian heroiſm, which, neither moved with the threatenings of pain, nor with the blandiſhments of pleaſure, holds on rejoicing to the end; are all of them but expreſſions of this character, varied and diverſified according to the occurrences of life. They are the light, the giddy, and the volatile, who are the ſport of caprice, or the prey of paſſion. Perſons of ſuch a character have no permanent principle of action; they are the ſinners or the ſaints of accident; and aſſume every folly to which the faſhion of the world gives its ſanction. Very different is the ſerious man who communes with his own heart. He follows not the multitude. He poſſeſſes that ſtrenuous and ſteady mind, which walks by its own light, which holds its purpoſe to the laſt; that ſelf-deciding ſpirit which is prepared to act, to ſuffer, or to die, as duty requires. Being thus, by the grace of God, the maſter of his own mind, he is above the world; and through proſperity or adverſity, through life or death, goes forth conquering and to conquer. He is

not guided by events like the giddy multitude, who fall into any form by the fortuitous concourſe of accidents; but, imitating the Providence of Heaven, he takes a direction of events, and makes the courſe of human affairs bend to his purpoſes, and terminate in his honor.

Further, this temper and diſpoſition is no leſs favourable to the milder virtues of humanity. A ſerious mind is the companion of a feeling heart. It is akin to that virtuous ſenſibility, from which all the ſympathetic emotions are derived; and readily aſſociates with thoſe good affections which conſtitute the moſt amiable part of our nature. The thoughtleſs and the diſſipated are unconcerned ſpectators of human happineſs or miſery; they mar not their enjoyments by ruſhing into foreign wo; and are never ſo much in earneſt, as to give a tear to the diſtreſſes of mankind. "They lie upon beds of ivory," ſaith the Prophet; "they ſtretch themſelves upon their couch-"es; they chant to the ſound of the viol; and they "anoint themſelves with the chief ointments; but "they are not grieved for the affliction of their breth-"ren." But he who feareth God will alſo regard man. The hour of incenſe has always been the hour of almſgiving. Whilſt the heart is lifted up in devotion to God, the hands will be ſtretched out in beneficence to man. Think not, my friends, that theſe are duties of inferior importance, and not proper to be called up to your remembrance upon this occaſion. The ordinance which you are ſoon to celebrate, is the communion of ſaints, and the feaſt of love. The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, ſaith the Apoſtle, is it not the communion of the blood of

Chriſt? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt? As we are all partakers of that one bread, ſo by that participation, we being many, become one body. Being thus the members of one body, the great law follows, which he afterwards lays down, that if one member ſuffers, all the members ſhould ſuffer with it; and if one member rejoices, all the members ſhould rejoice.

The *ſecond* thing propoſed, was to ſhew you the ſuitableneſs of this temper of mind to our preſent ſtate.

And, in the *firſt* place, it is ſuited to that dark and uncertain ſtate of being in which we now live. Human life is not formed to anſwer thoſe high expectations, which, in the era of youth and imagination, we are apt to entertain. When we firſt ſet out in life, we bid defiance to the evil day; we indulge ourſelves in dreams and viſions of romantic bliſs; and fondly lay the ſcene of perfect and uninterrupted happineſs for the time to come. But experience ſoon undeceives us. We awake, and find that it was but a dream. We make but few ſteps in life, without finding the world to be a turbulent ſcene; we ſoon experience the changes that await us, and feel the thorns of the wilderneſs wherein we dwell. Our hopes are frequently blaſted in the bud; our deſigns are defeated in the very moment of expectation, and we meet with ſorrow, and vexation, and diſappointment, on all hands. There are lives beſide our *own*, in which we are deeply intereſted; lives in which *our* happineſs is placed, and on which our hopes depend. Juſt when we have laid a plan of happy life; when, after the experience of years, we

have found out a few choſen friends, and have begun to enjoy that little circle in which we would wiſh to live and to die, an unexpected ſtroke diſappoints our hopes, and lays all our ſchemes in the duſt. When, after much labour and care, we have reared the goodly ſtructure; when we have fenced it, as we fondly imagine, from every ſtorm that blows, and indulge the pleaſing hope, that it will always endure, an inviſible hand interpoſes, and overturns it from the foundation. Who knoweth what awaits him in life? Who knoweth the changes through which he is deſtined to paſs? Son of proſperity! Thou now lookeſt forth from thy high tower; thou now glorieſt in thine excellence; thou ſayeſt that thy mountain ſtands ſtrong, and that thou art firm as the cedar of Lebanon—*But ſtand in awe.* Before the mighty God of Jacob, and by the blaſt of the breath of his noſtrils, the mountain hath been overturned, and the cedar in Lebanon hath fallen like the leaf before the whirlwind. At this very moment of time, the wheel is in motion that reverſes the lot of men; that brings the proſperous to the duſt, and lays the mighty low. Now, O man! thou rejoiceſt in thy ſtrength; but know, that for thee the bed of languiſhing is ſpread; pale, ghaſtly, and ſtretched on thy couch, thou ſhalt number the tedious hours, the reſtleſs days, the weariſome nights, that are appointed to thee, till thy ſoul ſhall be ready to "chooſe "death rather than life." Thou now removeſt from thee the evil day, and ſayeſt, in thy heart, thou ſhalt never ſee ſorrow; but remember the changes of this mortal life; for thee the "cup of trembling" is prepared, and the "wine of aſtoniſhment is poured

"but." How often, in an inſtant, doth a hand unſeen ſhift the ſcene of the world! The calmeſt and the ſtilleſt hour precedes the whirlwind, and it hath thundered in the ſereneſt ſky. The monarch hath drawn the chariot of ſtate, in which he was wont to ride in triumph, and the greateſt who ever awed the world have moralized at the turn of the wheel.

In the *ſecond* place, The propriety of this temper will appear, if we conſider the ſcene that ſoon awaits us, and the awful change of being that we have to undergo. The ſentence of the Lord is paſſed upon all fleſh. Man, who art born of a woman! one day thou muſt die. The decree is gone forth, and the time appointed for its fulfilment is approaching faſt. Short is the period which is allotted to mortal man. In a little time the ſcene changes, and the places that knew us ſhall know us no more. We bid an eternal adieu to all below the ſun; we enter on a new ſtate of being, and appear in the immediate preſence of God. After death comes the judgment. Thou muſt anſwer, O man! to the Searcher of hearts, for the deeds done in the body. The actions of thy paſt life ſhall riſe up to thy remembrance; the ſecrets of thy ſoul ſhall be diſcloſed; and thy eternal doom be fixed by God, the Judge of all. In thy laſt moments, thou *wilt be ſerious* and *ſtand in awe.* The moſt thoughtleſs ſinner will ſtand aghaſt, and the ſtouteſt heart will tremble at that awful, that parting hour, when, to the cloſing eye, God appears, with as full conviction, as if the curtain between both worlds was withdrawn, and the Judge in very deed deſcended to his tribunal. How ſerious wilt thou be when ſurrounded by the ſad circle of thy

weeping friends, thou readeſt in their altered looks, that thy hour is come; when cut off from all connection with mortality, thou takeſt thy laſt look of what thou heldeſt dear in life; when the cold ſweat, the ſhivering limb, and the voice faultering in the throat, announce thy departure into the world unknown! What manner of perſons ought we to be, who have ſuch events awaiting us! Ought we not to ſtand in awe; to join trembling with our mirth; to commune with our hearts alone, and be ſtill as in the preſence of that God, before whoſe tribunal we have ſoon to appear?

In the *third* place, This frame of mind is peculiarly proper for you now, as a preparation for that ſolemnity which you are ſoon to celebrate. Holy is every ordinance of the Lord; but this is the holieſt of all, and ſhould inſpire us with reverence and godly fear. You are to be engaged in the moſt ſolemn ordinance of our religion. You are to be employed in the moſt important work of your lives, to ſeal your vows in the faith of everlaſting redemption. You are going to tranſact with the God of Glory, before whom ten thouſand times ten thouſand angels and archangels bow down and admire and adore. You are about to commemorate the moſt tremendous event which is to be found in the records of time; that ſcene which made the ſun grow dark, and which the earth trembled to behold. God ſhows himſelf to be awful, even when he manifeſts his mercy, and cauſes all his goodneſs to paſs before you. When he bleſſes men with the greateſt teſtimony of his love, it is by ſmiting his own Son; when the gate of heaven is ſet open to the world, it is opened by *the blood of*

One who is higher than the heavens. Whilſt thou rejoiceſt therefore at the remembrance of thy redemption, think with wonder upon the ranſom by which it is accompliſhed, and implore the aſſiſtance of the Divine ſpirit, that you may ſerve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

SERMON VI.

JOB xxx. 23.

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the houſe appointed for all living.

THIS book of Job contains the hiſtory of a righteous man, fallen from the height of proſperity, into ſcenes of great diſtreſs. Almoſt every affliction which falls to the lot of mortal man embittered his life. His goods were taken away by robbers; his body was ſmitten by a loathſome and tormenting diſeaſe; his family was cut off, and all his company made deſolate by a ſudden ſtroke from heaven; his ſurviving friends proved miſerable comforters, and, inſtead of relieving, added to his afflictions. His head was bare to every blaſt of adverſity, and his heart bled with all the varieties of pain. In the courſe of his complaint, he utters the genuine voice of ſorrow, and pours forth his ſoul in lamentation and wo. He ſets before us the evil day; he ſhows us the dark ſide of things, and preſents to view thoſe ſhades in the picture of human life, which muſt one day meet our eye. From theſe calamities, he paſſes, by a natural tranſition, to the conſideration of the laſt evil in human life: "I know that "thou wilt bring me to death, and to the houſe ap"pointed for all living."

Man is a ſerious being. There is a ſtring in the heart which accords to the voice of ſorrow, and im-

preſſions of grief take the ſtrongeſt hold of the mind. There is a time when ſolitude has a charm; when cheerfulneſs gives place to melancholy; and when the houſe of mourning is better ſuited to the ſoul than the houſe of mirth. Even our amuſements often partake of a ſerious turn. For the ſake of amuſement, we give our attention to hiſtories of wo; we ſit ſpectators to the ſcene of ſorrow, and devote the hours to melancholy and to tears. And yet, by a ſtrange perverſion of mind, though we ruſh into foreign wo, and take delight in weeping for the fate of others, yet our own departure excites little attention or regard, notwithſtanding the many warnings which tell us that here we have no continuing city. Although few weeks elapſe without being marked with the funeral of a neighbour or a friend, we remain in a criminal indifference; the tear is ſoon dried upon our cheeks, and we muſe upon the fate of our friends with unconcern. If, by removing the thought of death, men could remove the day of death, their conduct would admit of an excuſe. But whether you think of it or not, death approaches, and the want of preparation will only ſerve to ſharpen the ſting, by the ſurpriſe with which it may ſtrike.

Since we know then aſſuredly, that God will bring us to death, and to the houſe appointed for all living, let us conſider, in the *firſt* place, the certainty of its approaching ſoon; *ſecondly*, the time and manner of its arrival; and, *thirdly*, the change which it introduces.

In the *firſt* place, let us conſider the certainty of death's approaching ſoon.

All the works of nature, in this inferior ſyſtem,

ſeem only made to be deſtroyed. Man is not exempted. There is a principle of mortality in our frame, and, as if we were only born to die, the firſt ſtep we take in life is a ſtep to the grave. It was not always ſo. Adam came from the hands of his Creator perfect and immortal. The Almighty created man after his own image. He planted in his frame the ſeeds of eternal life, to grow and flouriſh through a ſucceſſion of ages. This noble ſhoot, which the hand of the Moſt High had planted, was blaſted by ſin. When man became a ſinner, he became mortal. The doom was pronounced, that, after few and evil days, he ſhould return to the duſt from whence he was taken. Since that time, as ſoon as our eyes open on the light, we come under the law of mortality, and the ſentence of death is paſſed. In the morning of our day, we ſet out on our journey for eternity; thither we are all faſt tending; and day and night we travel on without intermiſſion. There is no ſtanding ſtill on this road. To this great rendezvous of the ſons of Adam we are continually drawing nearer and nearer. Our life is for ever on the wing, although we mark not its flight. Our motion down the ſtream of time is ſo ſmooth and ſilent, that though we are for ever moving, we perceive it not, till we arrive at the ocean of eternity. Even now, death is doing his work. At this very moment of time, multitudes are ſtretched on that bed from which they ſhall riſe no more. The blood is ceaſing to flow; the breath is going out; and the ſpirit taking its departure for the world unknown.

When we look back on our former years, how many do we find who began the journey of life along

with us, and promiſed to themſelves long life and happy days, cut off in the midſt of their career, and fallen at our ſide! They have but gone before us; one day we muſt follow. O man! who now rejoiceſt in the pride of life, and looking abroad, ſayeſt in thy heart, thou ſhalt never ſee ſorrow, for thee the bed of death is ſpread; the worm calls for thee to be her companion; thou muſt enter the dominions of the dead, and be gathered to the duſt of thy fathers. If then death be certainly approaching faſt, let us learn the true value of life. If death be at hand, then certainly time is precious. Now the day ſhines, and the Maſter calls us; in a little time the night cometh, when no man can work. To-day, therefore, hear the voice which calls you to heaven. "Now "is the accepted time; now is the day of ſalvation." "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy "might; for there is no work, nor device, nor "knowledge, nor wiſdom in the grave, whither "thou goeſt."

In the *ſecond* place, we may conſider the time and manner of the arrival of death.

Death is called in Scripture, *the land without any order;* and without any order the king of terrors makes his aproaches in the world. The commiſſion given from on high was, "Go into the world: "Strike; ſtrike ſo, that the dead may alarm the liv-"ing." Hence it is, that we ſeldom ſee men running the full career of life; growing old among their children's children, and then falling aſleep in the arms of nature, as in the embraces of a kind mother; coming to the grave like a ſhock of corn fully ripe; like flowers that ſhut up at the cloſe of the day.

Death walks through the world without any order. He delights to ſurpriſe, to give a ſhock to mankind. Hence, he leaves the wretched to prolong the line of their ſorrows, and cuts off the fortunate in the midſt of their career; he ſuffers the aged to ſurvive himſelf, to outlive life, to ſtalk about the ghoſt of what he was, and aims his arrow at the heart of the young who puts the evil day far from him. He delights to ſee the feeble carrying the vigorous to the grave, and the father building the tomb of his children. Often when his approaches are leaſt expected, he burſts at once upon the world, like an earthquake in the dead of night, or thunder in the ſerene ſky. All ages and conditions he ſweeps away without diſtinction; the young man juſt entering into life, high in hope, elated with joy, and promiſing to himſelf a length of years; the father of a family from the embraces of his wife and children; the man of the world, when his deſigns are ripening to execution, and the long expected criſis of enjoyment ſeems to approach. Theſe and all others are hurried promiſcuouſly off the ſtage, and laid without order in the common grave. Every path in the world leads to the tomb, and every hour in life hath been to ſome the laſt hour.

Without order too, is the manner of death's approach. The king of terrors wears a thouſand forms; pains and diſeaſes, a numerous and a direful train, compoſe his hoſt. Marking out unhappy man for their prey, they attack the ſeat of life, or the ſeat of underſtanding; hurry him off the ſtage in an inſtant, or make him pine by ſlow degrees: blaſting the bloom of life, or, waiting till the decline, according to the pathetic picture of Solomon, "They make the

" ſtrong men bow themſelves, and the keepers of the " houſe tremble; make the grinders ceaſe; bring " the daughters of muſic low; darken the ſun, and " the moon, and the ſtars; ſcatter fears in the way, " and make deſire itſelf to fail, until the ſilver cord " be looſed, and the golden bowl be broken, when " the duſt returns to the duſt as it was, and the ſpir- " it aſcends to God who gave it."

In the *third* place, We have to conſider the change which death introduces.

Man was made after the image of God; and the human form divine, the ſeat of ſo many heavenly faculties, graces and virtues, exhibits a temple not unworthy of its Maker. Men in their collective capacity, and united as nations, have diſplayed a wide field of exertion and of glory. The globe hath been covered with monuments of their power, and the voice of hiſtory tranſmits their renown from one generation to another. But when we paſs from the living world to the dead, What a ſad picture do we behold! The fall and deſolation of human nature; the ruins of man; the duſt and aſhes of many generations ſcattered over the earth. The high and the low; the mighty and the mean; the king and the cottager, lie blended together without any order. The worm is the companion, is the ſiſter of him, who thought himſelf of a different ſpecies from the reſt of mankind. A few feet of earth contain the aſhes of him who conquered the globe; the ſhadows of the long night ſtretch over all alike; the monarch of diſorder, the great leveller of mankind, lays all on the bed of clay in equal meanneſs. In the courſe of time, the land of deſolation becomes ſtill more deſ-

olate; the things that were, become as if they had never been; Babylon is a ruin; her heroes are duſt; not a trace remains of the glory that ſhone over the earth, and not a ſtone to tell where the maſter of the world is laid. Such, in general, is the humiliating aſpect of the tomb; but let us take a nearer view of the houſe appointed for all living. Man ſets out in the morning of his day, high in hope, and elated with joy. The moſt important objects to him are the companions of his journey. They ſet out together in the career of life, and, after many mutual endearments, walk hand in hand through the paths of childhood and of youth. It is with a giddy recollection we look back on the paſt, when we conſider the number and the value of thoſe, whom unforeſeen diſaſter and the hand of deſtiny have ſwept from our ſide. Alas! When the awful mandate comes from on high concerning men, to change the countenance, and to ſend them away, what ſad ſpectacles do they become! The friends whom we knew, and valued, and loved; our companions in the path of life; the partners of our tender hours, with whom we took ſweet counſel, and walked in company to the houſe of God, have paſſed to the land of forgetfulneſs, and have no more connection with the living world. Low lies the head that was once crowned with honor. Silent is the tongue to whoſe accents we ſurrendered the ſoul, and to whoſe language of friendſhip and affection we wiſhed to liſten for ever. Beamleſs is the eye, and cloſed in night, which looked ſerenity and ſweetneſs and love. The face that was to us as the face of an angel, is mangled and deformed; the heart that glowed with the pureſt fire, and beat

with the beſt affections, is now become a clod of the valley.

But ſhall it always continue ſo? If a man die, ſhall he live again! There is hope of a tree if it be cut down; but man giveth up the ghoſt, and where is he? Has the breath of the Almighty, which animated his frame, vaniſhed into the air? Is he who triumphed in the hope of immortality, inferior to the worm, his companion in the tomb? Will light never riſe on the long night of the grave? Does the mighty flood that has ſwept away the nations and the ages, ebb to flow no more? Have the wiſe and the worthy; the pious and the pure; the generous and the juſt; the great and the good; the excellent ones of the earth, who, from age to age, have ſhone brighter than all the ſtars of heaven, withdrawn into the ſhade of annihilation, and ſet in darkneſs to riſe no more? No. While "the duſt returns to the earth as it was, the "ſpirit ſhall return unto God who gave it." Life and immortality are brought to light by the Goſpel of Chriſt. "We know, that if our earthly houſe "of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a build-"ing of God, an houſe not made with hands, eter-"nal in the heavens."

The periods of human life paſſing away; the certainty of the diſſolution which awaits us, and the frequent examples of mortality, which continually ſtrike our view, lead us to reflect with ſerioufneſs upon the houſe appointed for all living. Death is the great teacher of mankind; the voice of wiſdom comes from the tomb; reflections, which ſhow us the vanity, will teach us the value of life. Such meditations are particularly ſuited to beings like us, who are ſubject

to infirmities and defects. For ſuch is the weakneſs of human nature in this imperfect ſtate; ſuch is the ſtrength of tempation in this evil world, that frail man is often led aſtray before he is aware. The enemy of the ſoul attacks us in every quarter; approaches often under falſe colours, and tries every diſguiſe, to deceive and to deſtroy. Vice often borders on virtue; the narrow path and the broad way lie ſo near, that it is difficult to diſtinguiſh them, ſo as to order our goings aright. Inadvertence may frequently betray; the impetuoſity of paſſion may precipitate, and the gentleneſs of our own nature miſlead us into ſteps fatal to our peace. I ſpeak not of wicked men, who acknowledge no guide but their paſſions, and ſubmit to no law but what one vice impoſes upon another. I talk of the ſincere and the good. The moſt watchful Chriſtian has his unguarded moments; the moſt prudent man ſpeaks unadviſedly with his lips, and the meekeſt lets the ſun go down upon his wrath. Alas! Man in his beſt eſtate is altogether vanity, and always ſtands in need of the leſſon from the tomb. "O that they were wiſe," ſaid Moſes, "that they underſtood this, that they would "conſider their latter end!"

SERMON VII.

1 Cor. xv. 55. 57.

O death! Where is thy ſting? O grave! Where is thy victory?—Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

THE Meſſiah is foretold in ancient prophecy, as a magnificent Conqueror. His victories were celebrated, and his triumphs were ſung, long before the time of his appearance to Iſrael. "Who is this," ſaith the prophet Iſaiah, pointing him out to the Old Teſtament Church, "Who is "this that cometh from Edom; with dyed garments "from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, "travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength?"—"I "have ſet my King upon my holy hill of Zion.—I "ſhall give him the heathen for his inheritance, and "the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion." As a Conqueror, he had to deſtroy the works of the great enemy of mankind; and to overcome death, the king of terrors.

The method of accompliſhing this victory, was as ſurpriſing as the love which gave it birth. "Foraſ- "much as the children are partakers of fleſh and "blood, he himſelf likewiſe took part of the ſame, "that through his own death, he might deſtroy him "that had the power of death, that is the devil, "and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were "all their lifetime ſubject to bondage." Accord-

ingly, his paſſion on the croſs, which you have this day commemorated, was the very victory which he obtained. The hour in which he ſuffered, was alſo the hour in which he overcame. Then he bruiſed the head of the old ſerpent, who had ſeduced our firſt parents to rebel againſt their Maker; then he diſarmed the king of terrors, who had uſurped dominion over the nations; then triumphing over the legions of hell, and the powers of darkneſs, he made a ſhow of them openly. Not for himſelf, but for us did he conquer. The Captain of our ſalvation fought, that we might overcome. He obtained the victory, that we may join in the triumphal ſong, as we now do, when we repeat theſe words of the Apoſtle; "O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! "where is thy victory?"

It is the glory of the Chriſtian religion, that it abounds with conſolations under all the evils of life; nor is its benign influence confined to the courſe of life, but even extends to death itſelf. It delivers us from the agony of the laſt hour; ſets us free from the fears which then perplex the timid; from the horrors which haunt the offender, though penitent, and from all the darkneſs which involves our mortal ſtate. So complete is the victory we obtain, that Jeſus Chriſt is ſaid in Scripture to have *aboliſhed* death.

The evils in death, from which Jeſus Chriſt ſets us free, are the following: in the *firſt* place, The doubts and fears that are apt to perplex the mind, from the uncertainty in which a future ſtate is involved. *Secondly*, The apprehenſions of wrath and forebodings of puniſhments, proceeding from the conſciouſneſs of ſin. *Thirdly*, The fears that ariſe in the

mind upon the awful tranſition from this world to the next.

In the *firſt* place, Jeſus Chriſt gives us victory over death, by delivering us from the doubts and fears which aroſe in the minds of thoſe who knew not the goſpel, from the uncertainty in which a future ſtate was involved.

Without Divine Revelation, men wandered in the dark with reſpect to an after life. Unaſſiſted reaſon could give but imperfect information on this important article. Conjectures, in place of diſcoveries, preſumptions, in place of demonſtrations, were all that it could offer to the inquiring mind. The unenlightened eye could not clearly pierce the cloud which veiled futurity from mortal view. The light of nature reached little farther than the limits of this globe, and ſhed but a feeble ray upon the region beyond the grave. Hence, thoſe heathen nations, of whom the Apoſtle ſpeaks, are deſcribed as *ſorrowing* and *having no hope*. And whence could reaſon derive complete information, that there was a ſtate of immortality beyond the grave? Conſult with appearances in nature, and you find but few intimations of a future life. Deſtruction ſeems to be one of the great laws of the ſyſtem. The various forms of life are indeed preſerved; but while the ſpecies remains, the individual periſhes. Every thing that you behold around you, bears the marks of mortality, and the ſymptoms of decay. He only who is, and was, and is to come, is without any variableneſs or ſhadow of turning. Every thing paſſes away. A great and mighty river, for ages and centuries, has been rolling on, and ſweeping away all that ever lived, to the

vaſt abyſs of eternity. On that darkneſs light does not riſe. From that unknown country none return. On that devouring deep, which has ſwallowed up every thing, no veſtige appears of the things that were.

There are particular appearances alſo which might naturally excite an alarm for the future. The human machine is ſo conſtituted, that ſoul and body ſeem often to decay together. To the eye of ſenſe, as the beaſt dies, ſo dies the man. Death ſeems to cloſe the ſcene, and the grave to put a final period to the proſpects of man. The words of Job beautifully expreſs the anxiety of the mind on this ſubject. "If "a man die, ſhall he live again? There is hope of a "tree if it be cut down, that it will ſprout again, "and that the tender branch thereof will not ceaſe. "Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and "the ſtock thereof die in the ground; yet, through "the ſcent of water it will bud, and bring forth "boughs like a plant: but man dieth, and is cut "off; man giveth up the ghoſt, and where is he? "As the waters fail from the ſea; as the flood de-"cayeth and drieth up: ſo man lieth down, and ri-"ſeth not; till the heavens be no more, they ſhall "not awake, nor be raiſed out of their ſleep." But what a dreadful proſpect does annihilation preſent to the mind! To be an outcaſt from exiſtence; to be blotted out from the book of life; to mingle with the duſt, and be ſcattered over the earth, as if the breath of life had never animated our frame! Man cannot ſupport the thought. Is the light which ſhone brighter than all the ſtars of heaven ſet in darkneſs, to riſe no more? Are all the hopes of man come to

this, to be taken into the councils of the Almighty; to be admitted to behold part of that plan of Providence which governs the world, and when his eyes are juſt opened, to read the book, to be ſhut for ever? If ſuch were to be our ſtate, we would be of all creatures the moſt miſerable. The world appears a chaos without form, and void of order. From the throne of nature, God departs, and there appears a cruel and capricious being, who delights in death, and makes ſport of human miſery.

From this ſtate of doubts and fears, we are delivered by the Goſpel of Jeſus. The meſſage which he brought, was life and immortality. From the Star of Jacob, light ſhone even upon the ſhades of death. As a proof of immortality, he called back the departed ſpirit from the world unknown; as an earneſt of the reſurrection to a future life, he himſelf aroſe from the dead. When we contemplate the tomb of nature, we cry out, "Can theſe dry bones "live?" When we contemplate the tomb of Jeſus, we ſay, "Yes, they can live!" As he aroſe, we ſhall in like manner ariſe. In the tomb of nature, you ſee man return to the duſt from whence he was taken. In the tomb of Jeſus, you ſee man reſtored to life again. In the tomb of nature, you ſee the ſhades of death fall on the weary traveller, and the darkneſs of the long night cloſe over his head. In the tomb of Jeſus, you ſee light ariſe upon the ſhades of death, and the morning dawn upon the long night of the grave. On the tomb of nature, it is written, "Be-"hold thy end, O man! Duſt thou art, and unto duſt "thou ſhalt return. Thou, who now calleſt thy-"ſelf the ſon of heaven, ſhalt become one of the

" clods of the valley." On the tomb of Chriſt is written, " Thou dieſt, O man! but to live again. " When duſt returns to duſt, the ſpirit ſhall return " to God who gave it. I am the reſurrection and the " life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, " yet ſhall he live." From the tomb of nature, you hear a voice, " For ever ſilent is the land of forget- " fulneſs? From the ſlumbers of the grave, ſhall we " awake no more? Like the flowers of the field, ſhall " we be as though we had never been?" From the tomb of Jeſus, you hear, " Bleſſed are the dead that " die in the Lord, thus ſaith the Spirit, for they reſt " from their labours, and paſs into glory:—In my " Father's houſe, there are many manſions; if it were " not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a " place for you, and if I go away, I will come again, " and take you unto myſelf, that where I am, there " ye may be alſo."

Will not this aſſurance of a happy immortality, and a bleſſed reſurrection, in a great meaſure remove the terror and the ſting of death? May we not walk without diſmay through the dark valley, when we are conducted by a beam from heaven? May we not endure the toſſings of one ſtormy night, when it carries us to the ſhore that we long for? What cauſe have we to dread the meſſenger who brings us to our Father's houſe? Should not our fears about futurity abate, when we hear God addreſſing us with reſpect to death, as he did the Patriarch of old, upon going to Egypt, " Fear not to go down to the grave; " I will go down with thee, and will bring thee up " again."

Secondly, Our victory over death conſiſts in our

being delivered from the apprehenſions of wrath, and forebodings of puniſhment, which ariſe in the mind from the conſciouſneſs of ſin.

That there is a God who governs the world, the patron of righteouſneſs, and the avenger of ſin, is ſo manifeſt from the light of nature, that the belief of it has obtained among all nations. That it ſhall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked; that God will reward thoſe who diligently ſeek him, and puniſh thoſe who tranſgreſs his laws, is the principle upon which all religion is founded. But whether mercy be an attribute in the Divine nature to ſuch an extent that God may be rendered propitious to thoſe who rebel againſt his authority, and diſobey his commandments, is an inquiry to which no ſatisfactory anſwer can be made. Many of the Divine attributes are conſpicuous from the works of creation; the power, the wiſdom, and the goodneſs of God, appear in creating the world; in ſuperintending that world which he has made; in diffuſing life wide over the ſyſtem of things, and providing the means of happineſs to all his creatures. But from no appearances in nature does it clearly follow, that the exerciſe of mercy to offenders is part of the plan by which the univerſe is governed. For any thing that we know from the light of nature, repentance alone may not be ſufficient to procure the remiſſion of ſins; the tears of contrition may be unavailable to waſh away the ſtains of a guilty life, and the Divine favour may be implored in vain by thoſe who have become obnoxious to the Divine diſpleaſure. If in the calm and ſerene hour of inquiry, man could find no conſolation in ſuch thoughts, how would he

be overwhelmed with horror, when his mind was diſordered with a ſenſe of guilt? When remembrance brought his former life to view, when reflection pierced him to the heart, darkneſs would ſpread itſelf over his mind, Deity would appear an object of terror, and the ſpirit, wounded by remorſe, would diſcern nothing but an offended Judge armed with thunders to puniſh the guilty. If, in the day of health and proſperity, theſe reflections were ſo powerful to embitter life, they would be a ſource of agony and deſpair when the laſt hour approached. When life flows according to our wiſhes, we may endeavour to conceal our ſins, and ſhut our ears againſt the voice of conſcience. But theſe artifices will avail little at the hour of death. Then things appear in their true colours. Then conſcience tells the truth, and the maſk is taken off from the man, when our ſins at that hour paſs before us in review. Guilty and polluted as we are, covered with confuſion, How ſhall we appear at the judgment ſeat of God, and anſwer at the bar of eternal juſtice? How ſhall duſt and aſhes ſtand in the preſence of that uncreated Glory, before which principalities and powers, bow down, tremble and adore? How ſhall guilty and ſelf-condemned creatures appear before Him, in whoſe ſight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly? This is the ſting of death. It is guilt that ſharpens the ſpear of the king of terrors. But even in this view we have victory over death, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. By his death upon the croſs, an atonement was made for the ſins of men. The wrath of God was averted from the world. A great plan of reconciliation is now unfolded in the

goſpel. Under the banner of the croſs, pardon is proclaimed to returning penitents. They who accept the offers of mercy, and who fly for refuge to the hope ſet before them, are taken into favour; their ſins are forgiven, and their names are written in the book of life. Over them death has no power. The king of terrors is transformed into an angel of peace, to waft them to their native country, where they long to be.

This, O Chriſtian! the death of thy Redeemer, is thy ſtrong conſolation; thy effectual remedy againſt the fear of death. What evil can come nigh to him for whom Jeſus died? Does the law which thou haſt broken, denounce vengeance againſt thee? Behold that law fulfilled in the meritorious life of thy Redeemer. Does the ſentence of wrath pronounced againſt the poſterity of Adam ſound in thine ears? Behold that ſentence blotted out, that *handwriting*, as the Apoſtle calls it, cancelled, nailed to thy Saviour's croſs, and left there as a trophy of his victory. Art thou afraid that the cry of thy offences may riſe to heaven, and reach the ears of juſtice? There is no place for it there; in room of it aſcends the voice of that blood which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel. Does the enemy of mankind accuſe thee at the judgment-ſeat? He is put to ſilence by thy Advocate and Interceſſor at the right hand of thy Father. Does death appear to thee in a form of terror, and hold out his ſting to alarm thy mind? His terror is removed, and his ſting was pulled out by that hand, which, on mount Calvary, was fixed to the accurſed tree. Art thou afraid that the arrows of divine wrath which ſmite the guilty, may be aim-

ed at thy head? Before they can touch thee, they muſt pierce that body, which, in the ſymbols of divine inſtitution, was this day held forth crucified among you, and which at the right hand of the Majeſty in the heavens, is for ever preſented in behalf of the redeemed. Well then may ye join in the triumphant ſong of the Apoſtle, "O death! where is "thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

In the *third* place, Jeſus Chriſt gives us victory over death, by yielding us conſolation and relief under the fears that ariſe in the mind upon the awful tranſition from this world to the next.

Who ever left the precincts of mortality without caſting a wiſhful look on what he left behind, and a trembling eye on the ſcene that is before him? Being formed by our Creator for enjoyments even in this life, we are endowed with a ſenſibility to the objects around us. We have affections, and we delight to indulge them: we have hearts, and we want to beſtow them. Bad as the world is, we find in it objects of affection and attachment. Even in this waſte and howling wilderneſs, there are ſpots of verdure and of beauty, of power to charm the mind, and make us cry out, "It is good for us to be here." When, after the obſervation and experience of years, we have found out the objects of the ſoul, and met with minds congenial to our own, what pangs muſt it give to the heart, to think of parting for ever? We even contract an attachment to inanimate objects. The tree under whoſe ſhadow we have often ſat; the fields where we have frequently ſtrayed; the hill, the ſcene of contemplation, or the haunt of friendſhip, become objects of paſſion to the mind, and up-

on our leaving them, excite a temporary ſorrow and regret. If theſe things can affect us with uneaſineſs, how great muſt be the affliction, when ſtretched on that bed from which we ſhall riſe no more, and looking about for the laſt time on the ſad circle of our weeping friends! How great muſt be the affliction, to diſſolve at once all the attachments of life; to bid an eternal adieu to the friends whom we long have loved, and to part for ever with all that is dear below the ſun! But let not the Chriſtian be diſconſolate. He parts with the objects of his affection, to meet them again; to meet them in a better world, where change never enters, and from whoſe bliſsful manſions ſorrow flies away. At the reſurrection of the juſt; in the great aſſembly of the ſons of God, when all the family of heaven are gathered together, not one perſon ſhall be miſſing that was worthy of thy affection or eſteem. And if among imperfect creatures, and in a troubled world, the kind, the tender, and the generous affections have ſuch power to charm the heart, that even the tears which they occaſion delight us, what joy unſpeakable and glorious will they produce, when they exiſt in perfect minds, and are improved by the purity of the heavens!

Chriſtianity alſo gives us conſolation in the tranſition from this world to the next. Every change in life awakens anxiety; whatever is unknown, is the object of fear; no wonder then that it is awful and alarming to nature, to think of that time when the hour of our departure is at hand; when this animal frame ſhall be diſſolved, and the myſterious bond between ſoul and body ſhall be broken. Even the viſible effects of mortality are not without terror; to

have no more a name among the living; to paſs into the dominions of the dead; to have the worm for a companion, and a ſiſter, are events at which nature ſhudders and ſtarts back. But more awful ſtill is the inviſible ſcene, when the curtain between both worlds ſhall be drawn back, and the ſoul naked and diſembodied appear in the preſence of its Creator. Even under theſe thoughts, the comforts of Chriſtianity may delight thy ſoul. Jeſus, thy Saviour, has the keys of death; the abodes of the dead are part of his kingdom. He lay in the grave, and hallowed it for the repoſe of the juſt. Before our Lord aſcended up on high, he ſaid to his diſciples, "I "go to my Father and to your Father, to my God "and to your God;" and when the time of your departure is at hand, you go to your Father and his Father, to your God and his God.

Enlightened by theſe diſcoveries, truſting to the merits of his Redeemer, and animated with the hope which is ſet before him, the Chriſtian will depart with tranquillity and joy. To him the bed of death will not be a ſcene of terror, nor the laſt hour an hour of deſpair. There is a majeſty in the death of the Chriſtian. He partakes of the ſpirit of that world to which he is advancing, and he meets his latter end with a face that looks to the heavens.

SERMON VIII.

PSALM xcvii. 1.

The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.

TO thinking men, the univerſe preſents a ſcene of wonders. They find themſelves brought into the world, they know not how. If they look around them, they behold the earth clothed with an infinite variety of herbs and fruits, ſubſervient to their uſe, or adminiſtering to their delight. If they look above them, they behold the hoſt of heaven walking in brightneſs and in beauty; the ſun ruling the day; the moon and the ſtars governing the night. If they attend to the courſe of nature, they behold with wonder the various revolutions of the year; the gradual return of the ſeaſons, and the conſtant viciſſitude of day and of night. Whilſt thus they are employed, they behold in the heavens the glory of their Creator; they diſcover in the firmament the handywork of Omnipotence, and they hear the voice that nature ſends out to the ends of the earth, that all things are the workmanſhip of a ſupreme and intelligent Cauſe. As from theſe events they conclude the Almighty to be the Maker of the world; from the ſame events, they conclude that he is the Governor of the world which he hath made, and that Divine power is as requiſite to preſerve the order and harmony of the world now, as it was neceſſary to eſtabliſh it at the firſt. But when experi-

ence unfolded to them the powers of natural bodies; when they ſaw machines contrived by human ſkill, exhibiting motions, and producing effects, ſimilar to thoſe which they obſerved in nature, by the impulſe of matter upon matter; and when they ſaw theſe machines regularly exhibiting ſuch motions, regularly producing ſuch effects, although the head that contrived, and the hand that put them together, were removed from them; this raiſed an opinion, in ſome ſpeculative minds, that the world reſembled ſuch machines; and that, as a clock will ſhow the hour of the day, in virtue of its original frame and conſtitution, without any further interpoſition of the artificer that framed it, ſo nature, in virtue of its original frame and conſtitution, may and does produce every effect which we ſee around us, without any further interpoſition of its Divine Author.

This opinion is frequently mentioned and confuted in the Sacred Scriptures. Thoſe men are condemned whoſe belief it was, that, in the courſe of human affairs, the Lord would not do good, neither would he do evil. Although I ſeldom chooſe to carry you through the barren and unpleaſant fields of controverſy, yet, as this queſtion affects ſo deeply our religious comfort in this ſtate, and our hopes of happineſs in a future world, I ſhall conſider it at large, and ſhall, in the *firſt* place, Show you the abſurdity of that opinion which would exclude God from the government of the world. *Secondly*, Eſtabliſh and confirm the doctrine of a *particular Providence*. *Thirdly*, Show you the grounds of joy ariſing to the world from ſuch a Providence.

In the *firſt* place, I am to ſhow the abſurdity of that

opinion which would exclude God from the government of the world.

It has been thought by ſome, "That the Creator "of the univerſe formed the conſtitution of nature in "ſuch a manner at the beginning, as to ſtand in need "of no ſucceeding change; that he eſtabliſhed certain "laws in the material and in the moral world, which "uniformly and invariably take place, producing all "the effects which he ever intended they ſhould pro-"duce; as when an artiſt frames a machine for cer-"tain purpoſes, and for a limited duration, the effects "which reſult from it ſpring not from the immediate "direction and influence of the artiſt, but from the "original frame and compoſition of the machine." Such is the opinion of thoſe who hold what they call a *general Providence*. We, on the other hand, maintain, that "Almighty God, upon ſpecial occa-"ſions, directs and overrules the courſe of events, "both in the natural and moral world, by an imme-"diate influence, to anſwer the great deſigns of his "univerſal government."

With reſpect to a general Providence, this mechanical ſyſtem, this engine by which ſome perſons would throw out the ſuperintending Providence of Heaven, is a creature of the brain. It is a mere preſumption. It is by its own nature incapable of proof. From whence ſhould the evidence ariſe? Art thou who excludeſt God from his works, intruſted with the ſecrets of heaven? Wert thou preſent when God laid the foundations of the world? Wert thou privy to his councils? Or do you now ſee, or can you ſhow, that original cauſe, or thoſe original cauſes, eſtabliſhed by God at the creation, from which all the various ef-

fects in nature may be deduced, and into which they may mechanically be reſolved? Can you ſhow the immediate cauſe of lightning or of rain, or of any other phenomenon in nature, and from the immediate cauſe aſcend to the ſecond, from the ſecond to the third, and ſo upward till you come to the laſt link of the chain, which hangs immediately upon the throne of God? This can be done in the works of art. An artiſt will ſhow you the dependence of all the movements in a machine upon one another. And when you are as well acquainted with the fabric of the world, as you may be with the ſtructure of a machine, you may then ſpeak of your chain of mechanical cauſes and effects. But, alas! the moſt improved philoſophy can do no more but ſkim the ſurface of things; and in its progreſs from the immediate viſible to the firſt inviſible cauſe, at one or two removes, it finds its period, beyond which it cannot go.

Further, This mechanical ſyſtem of governing the world without the immediate interpoſition of the Deity, undermines the foundation of all religious worſhip. When we pray for our daily bread, what do we aſk but the bleſſing of God upon the earth, to yield her fruits in due ſeaſon? When we aſk the bleſſing of God upon our meals, what do we leſs than recogniſe his ſupreme power, and implore him to make the gifts of his Providence the means of our ſuſtenance and refreſhment? This diſclaims every notion of natural cauſes and effects that ſhuts out God; it ſuppoſes his concurrence and co-operation directing all the operations of nature. Again, when we pray for the graces and virtues of the ſpiritual life, what do we aſk but the Divine aid to ſtrengthen

en the good diſpoſitions he hath already given us, and ſo to direct and order the courſe of events, that we may be kept from temptation, or not be overcome when we are tempted? But this ſuppoſes the ſuperintendence of God over us; ſuppoſes his interpoſition in human affairs; ſuppoſes his providence continually exerted in adminiſtering to the wants of his creatures, according as their circumſtances require. If this account be juſt, then our worſhip is a reaſonable ſervice. But if theſe are vain words, then our worſhip alſo is vain. Then every one that goes into his cloſet to pray, goes only to act fooliſhly; then all the good and the pious, every where over the face of the whole earth, that are calling upon the Moſt High God, are as uſeleſsly, as abſurdly employed, as if they were falling down before a dumb idol, and paying their devotions to images of wood or ſtone.

Further ſtill, This mechanical ſyſtem, in a great meaſure, annihilates the moral perfections of the Divine nature. It places the Almighty in a ſtate of indolence, which is inconſiſtent with every idea of perfection; it makes him an idle and unconcerned ſpectator of his own works, and repreſents him as beholding virtue and vice, the ſinner and the ſaint, with an equal eye. There are many ſcenes in human life, at which, if we were preſent, it would be criminal for us not to take a part. Did we ſee the hands of the violent raiſed to ſhed innocent blood, and not ruſh to prevent the horrid deed; did we know the retreats of the robber and murderer, and not endeavour to bring them to public juſtice, we would be reckoned in part guilty of their crimes, as, by a criminal omiſſion, we ſhould endanger the peace of the

public, and the intereſts of ſociety: If we, being evil, would abhor ſuch a character, ſhall we impute it, can we impute it, to Him who is infinite in goodneſs, and who is poſſeſſed of abſolute perfection? To what purpoſe is God every where peſent, if he is not every where employed? Whereto ſerves infinite power, if it muſt be for ever dormant? Whereto ſerves infinite wiſdom, if it is never to be exerciſed? To what purpoſe are the Divine goodneſs, and the Divine juſtice, if we only hear of their names? Are all the Attributes of the Godhead in vain? How falſe, how abſurd, how blaſphemous, is an opinion that would deſtroy every Divine perfection!

I have thus ſhown you the abſurdity of that ſyſtem which would exclude God from the government of the univerſe; and I am now, in the *ſecond* place, to eſtabliſh and confirm the doctrine of a particular Providence. This doctrine is founded both upon reaſon and the Scriptures.

Reaſon and true philoſophy never attempt to ſeparate God from his works. We muſt own him in the ſky to hold the planets in their reſpective orbits; we muſt own him in the earth, and in the ſeas, to keep them within their proper bounds, and we muſt own him through the whole ſyſtem of nature, to ſupport and maintain that gravitating force which gives conſiſtency and ſtability to all material things. Reaſon tells us, that it is not probable that the Creator of the univerſe would forſake that world which he had made; that it is not probable that a Being poſſeſſed of infinite perfection can be an idle and unconcerned ſpectator of his own works.

But our chief evidence for this doctrine reſts up-

on Revelation. Mankind obtained early notices of the Divine ſuperintendence, by peculiar interpoſitions. In the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, we have an account of the loſs of Paradiſe by ſin; of the baniſhment of Cain for the murder of his brother; of the tranſlation of Enoch, as the reward of his righteouſneſs; of the wickedneſs of the old world, and its deſtruction by the deluge, Noah and his family only excepted, who, by the eminence of his piety, found grace in the ſight of God to become the Father of the new world. When this new world revolted from God, and ran into idolatry, we ſee Abraham called out to be the head of a mighty nation, which grew up and flouriſhed, by a ſeries of the moſt wonderful providences; governed by laws of God's own appointment; with promiſes of protection and bleſſing, ſo long as they ſhould be obedient, and threatenings of puniſhment and deſtruction, if they fell off to ſerve other gods; which in the event were punctually verified. This was a viſible and a ſtanding evidence of a governing Providence. The doctrine was thus eſtabliſhed upon a higher authority than reaſon, and upon better evidence than the light of nature. God revealed himſelf to men as the Governor of the world, the avenger of the wicked, and the protector of the good. But, although, in adminiſtering the affairs of the univerſe, the object of Providence ſhould be to depreſs the bad and to favour the good; yet an exact retribution of rewards and puniſhments was none of the ends of his adminiſtration in this ſcene of things. This would have defeated the plan of his Providence, and ſuperſeded the neceſſity of a day of judgment. Nevertheleſs, he would

frequently interpoſe to puniſh ſignal wickedneſs, or reward illuſtrious virtue. Thus, in the early ages of the world, he did often miraculouſly interpoſe, to let the nations underſtand that he took notice of their righteous or unrighteous deeds; that he had power to vindicate the honor of his laws; and to make examples whenever it was requiſite, for the correction and reformation of men. Miraculous interpoſitions were not intended to be permanent or perpetual; yet the providence of God was not to ceaſe. Accordingly, he took care to inform us, that what in the firſt ages he had done viſibly and by miracles, he would do in the latter ages by the inviſible direction of natural cauſes. The Scriptures are ſo full of this notion, that it would be endleſs to be particular. You may read the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, where you will ſee all the powers of nature ſummoned as inſtruments in the hand of the Almighty, to execute the purpoſes of his will; where you behold them commiſſioned to favour the good with national proſperity, with domeſtic comforts, with ſafety from their enemies, with fruitful ſeaſons, with a numerous offspring, and with an abundanee of all bleſſings; commiſſioned to puniſh the wicked with national diſtreſſes, with indigence, with ſlavery, with deſtructions and moleſtations of every kind, by war, by famine, and by all ſorts of diſeaſes. From all which, the plain inference is this, That the moſt common and moſt familiar events, are under the direction of God, and by him are uſed as inſtruments, either for the hurt or for the good of men.

How this particular Providence operates, may, in ſome degree, be conceived by us. Man, in his limit-

ed ſphere, can take ſome direction of natural cauſes. You can direct the element of fire either to warm or to conſume; the elements of air and water to cheriſh and to annoy. Does not that power, then, in a more illuſtrious manner, belong to God? Is it not as eaſy for *Him*, think you, to give laws to the tempeſt, where to ſpend its force; to direct the meteor flying in the air, where to fall, and whom to conſume? Are the elemental and ſubterraneous fires bound up? He can let them looſe. Are they broken looſe? He can collect them as in the hollow of his hand. And all this he performs, without unhinging the general ſyſtem, and without any viſible tokens to us, that he is at all concerned, though in truth he is the effective agent. In like manner, we may comprehend, in ſome meaſure, how God may direct, not only the motions of the inanimate and paſſive part of the creation, but alſo the determinations of free agents, to anſwer the purpoſes of his providence. The hearts of men are in the hand of the Lord, as much as the rivers of water. This does not in the leaſt deſtroy the freedom of human actions. Every one knows that the acts of free agents are determined by circumſtances; and theſe circumſtances are always in the hand of God. The diſpoſitions and reſolutions of men are apt to vary, according to the different turn or flow of their ſpirits, or their different ſituations in life, as to health or ſickneſs, ſtrength or weakneſs, joy or ſorrow; and by the direction of theſe, God may raiſe up enemies, or create friends, ſtir up war, or make peace. Take, as an inſtance, the hiſtory of Haman. That wicked man had long meditated the deſtruction of Mordecai the Jew, and

rather than not ſatiate his vengeance upon him, would involve the whole Jewiſh nation in utter deſtruction. He at laſt obtained a decree, ſentencing this whole people to the ſword; and the day was fixed. In this criſis of their fate, How was the choſen nation to be delivered? Was God viſibly and miraculouſly to interpoſe in favour of his own people? This he could have done; but he choſe rather to act according to the ordinary train of ſecond cauſes. He who giveth ſleep to his beloved, withheld it from Ahaſuerus, the monarch of Perſia. In order to paſs the night, he called for the records of his reign. There he found it written, that Mordecai had detected a conſpiracy formed againſt the life of the king, and that he had never been rewarded for it. By this ſingle circumſtance, a ſudden reverſe took place. Mordecai was advanced to honor and rewards; the villany of Haman was detected; the decree fatal to the Jews was revoked; and the nation of the Jews was ſaved from inſtant deſtruction. In like manner, in the hiſtory of Joſeph, and other hiſtories of the Old Teſtament, you ſee the moſt familiar events made inſtruments in the hand of God to effect the purpoſes of his will.

There is then a particular Providence. The arm of the Almighty, reaching from heaven to earth, is continually employed. All things are full of God. In the regions of the air; in the bowels of the earth; and in the chambers of the ſea, his power is felt. Every event in life is under his direction and control. Nothing is fortuitous or accidental. Let me caution you, however, againſt abuſing this doctrine, by judging of the characters of perſons from their

outward circumſtances. It is to be remembered, that the preſent life is not a ſtate of recompence, but a ſtate of trial; conſequently, men are not dealt with in outward diſpenſations according to their true character. The goods of Nature and Providence are diſtributed indiſcriminately among mankind. The ſun ſhines, the rain falls, upon the juſt and the unjuſt. It is a dangerous error, therefore, to judge of moral character from external condition in life. This was the error of Job's friends; this the foundation of the cenſures they caſt againſt this excellent perſon, and for which they were reproved. The intention of the book of Job is, to ſhow the falſeneſs of that ſuppoſition, by repreſenting the incomprehenſible Majeſty of God, and the unſearchable nature of his works. Many inſtances in Scripture confirm the truth of this obſervation. Who, that ſaw David reduced to ſtraits, wandering for refuge in the rocks and dens of the wilderneſs, would have believed him to be the prince whom God had choſen? Who, that beheld Nebuchadnezzar walking in his palace, ſurrounded with all the pomp and ſplendour of the eaſt, would have believed him to be the object of Divine diſpleaſure, and that the decree was gone out, that he was to be driven among the beaſts? Who, that beheld our Lord in the form of a ſervant, would have believed that he was the Maſter of Nature?

I am, *laſtly*, To deduce the practical conſequences from the doctrine, by ſhowing you the grounds of joy and conſolation that it gives to the world.

In the *firſt* place, The doctrine of a ſuperintending Providence yields us joy and conſolation with reſpect

to our lot in life. Many perſons are accuſtomed to complain concerning their ſituation and circumſtances in the world. Their deſires and their fortune do not correſpond; they think that they are miſplaced by Providence, and look upon the lot of their neighbours as more eligible than their own. It is impoſſible, in the preſent ſyſtem of things, that all men can be alike. Nature, through all her works, delights in variety. Though every flower is beautiful, and every ſtar is glorious; yet one flower excelleth another in beauty, and one ſtar exceedeth another in glory. There are alſo diverſities in human life, and a beautiful ſubordination prevails amongſt mankind. The Father of Spirits hath communicated himſelf to men in different degrees. But although all men cannot be alike; yet all men may enjoy a great meaſure of happineſs. Every ſtation in life poſſeſſes its comforts and advantages. In thoſe compariſons you make of your life with that of others, when you would wiſh to exchange places with ſome of your more fortunate neighbours, do you not always find ſomething in which you have the ſuperiority? Is there not ſome talent of the mind, ſome quality of the heart, ſomething where you think your ſtrength lies, ſome one ſource of enjoyment, which you would wiſh ſtill to retain? Is not this the teſtimony of nature, that you are happier in that path of life, than you would be in another? Wherever you are placed by Providence, the ſtation appointed is the poſt of honor. A general, in the day of battle, marſhals his army according as he ſees proper, and diſtributes the poſts of danger and importance, according to the courage and conduct of his ſoldiers.

Your Commander knows your abilities better than you do yourſelves; he preſcribed to you the duty you have to execute; and he marked out the path in which you are to ſeek for honor and immortality. It is from your diſcharge of theſe offices aſſigned to you, that the happineſs of your life, and the perfection of your character, are to ariſe. It is not from the ſphere they hold in life, but from the luſtre they caſt around them in that ſphere, that men rank in the Divine eſtimation, and figure in the annals of eternity. If, with five talents, you gain five more, or if, even with one talent, you gain another, you are as praiſeworthy as he who, with ten talents, gaineth other ten talents.

Further, As in a kingdom, every highway leads to the capital; as in a circle, every line terminates in the centre; ſo, in the wide circle of nature, every line terminates in heaven; and every path in life conducts alike to the great city of God. The preſent ſtate is intimately connected with the future; the life which we now lead, is an education for the life which is to come. If your mind were enlarged to comprehend all the connections and dependencies of things; if your eyes were opened to take in the whole of your immortal exiſtence, you would then ſee and acknowledge, that Providence had aſſigned to you the very ſtation you would have wiſhed to fill; the very part you would have choſen to act. Truſting, therefore, in that God who preſides over the univerſe; aſſured of that wiſdom and goodneſs which direct the whole train of the Divine adminiſtrations, each of us may expreſs our joy in the words of the Pſalmiſt: "The lines have fallen to me in pleaſ-

" ant places; I have a goodly heritage: the Lord is " the portion of mine inheritance; the Lord will " command the bleſſing, even life for evermore."

In the *ſecond* place, This doctrine will yield us conſolation during the afflictions which we meet with in life. If we believed that the univerſe was a ſtate of anarchy, confuſion, and uproar, that the Governor of the world was a cruel and malignant being, who made ſport of human miſery, and took pleaſure in puniſhing his unhappy creatures, ſuch a thought would overwhelm the mind; it would turn the gloom of adverſity into the ſhadow of death, and mingle poiſon in the cup of bitterneſs which we are doomed to drink. But the Scriptures inform us, that the dark diſpenſations of Providence are part of that plan which has the good of the world for its object; take their riſe from the goodneſs of our Father in heaven; are intended for the reformation and final bleſſedneſs of his children. The ſame word of life which ſays, " Bleſſed is the man whom thou " chooſeſt and makeſt approach unto thee," ſays alſo, " Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt." So far from being marks of the Divine wrath, the afflictions of life are tokens of the Divine love. While heedleſs and unthinking we go aſtray, God intereſts himſelf in our favour, and ſends theſe his meſſengers to bring us to himſelf. It is but a narrow and imperfect view we take of afflictions, when we conſider them only as trials. They are not ſo much intended for the trial as for the cultivation of virtue. They are ſent by Providence, to mortify your unruly paſſions; to wean you from the world; to prepare you for heaven. They are ſent for the improvement of

your nature; for the increaſe of your graces, and for the ſuperabounding of your joy to all eternity. When under the afflicting hand of Heaven therefore, you are ſtanding a candidate for immortality; you are ſingled out by Providence to exert the part of a chriſtian, and you are called forth to exhibit to the world a pattern of the ſuffering virtues. He is but a novice in the ſchool of Chriſt, who has not learned to ſuffer. The beſt affections of the heart, the nobleſt graces of the ſoul, the higheſt virtues of life, the offering that is moſt acceptable to Heaven, ariſe from the proper improvement of adverſity. The bleſſed above, whom the Prophet ſaw arrayed in white before the throne, came out of great tribulation; the bleſſed above, whom he heard ſinging the ſong of Moſes and the Lamb, learned the firſt notes of it on the bed of ſorrow.

Such is the intention of afflictions which Providence ſends, and even under theſe afflictions God is with his people. You are ever under the hand of a merciful Creator, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. He knoweth your frame; he remembereth that you are but duſt; he will afflict you no further than you are able to bear; and as your days are, he hath promiſed that your ſtrength ſhall be. Nay, in all your afflictions he is preſent with you, and the hand that bruiſed you binds up the wound. Let not then your hearts be troubled. Bear up under the preſſure of wo. Rejoice becauſe the Lord reigneth, and exult in the language of the Prophet; "Although the figtree "ſhould not bloſſom, nor fruit be found in the vine; "though the labour of the olive ſhould fail, and the

"field ſhould yield no meat; though the flocks "ſhould be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be "no herd in the ſtall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, "I will joy in the God of my ſalvation."

Thirdly, With reſpect to appearances of moral evil and diſorder, it is afflicting to the mind to behold diſorder in the univerſe of God: bad men often exalted, while the good man's lot is bitterneſs and pain: virtue depreſſed, and vice triumphant. He who cauſed light to ariſe out of darkneſs, and order and beauty to ſpring from chaos and confuſion, can correct theſe irregularities. He not only reſtrains, and ſays, "Hitherto, and no further." He alſo overrules and makes the wrath of men to praiſe him. Hear how he gives commiſſion, and ſends Sennacherib againſt Iſrael, as a general ſends a weapon of war. "O Aſſyrian, the rod of mine anger, "I will ſend him againſt an hypocritical nation, and "againſt the people of my wrath, to tread them "down like the mire of the ſtreets. Howbeit he "meaneth not ſo, neither doth his heart think ſo;" that is, neither doth his heart think that he is a mere inſtrument in the hand of God. David was raiſed to the throne of Iſrael by thoſe ſteps which his foes deviſed againſt him. The enemy of mankind, ſeducing our firſt parents, was the means of their being elevated to a greater degree of happineſs and glory.

Laſtly, With reſpect to our departure from this world, and entering upon a new ſtate of being, we know that the time is appointed, when duſt ſhall return unto duſt, and the ſpirit unto God who gave it. But it is awful, it is alarming to nature, to call up the

hour when the union between ſoul and body ſhall be diſſolved; when our connection with all that we held dear in life ſhall be broken off; when we ſhall enter upon a new ſtate of exiſtence, and become inhabitants of the world unknown. But even then the providence of God will give us comfort. The Lord reigneth king for ever and ever. The dominions of the dead are part of his kingdom; time and eternity, the world that now is, and the world that is to come, confeſs him for their Lord. When thou goeſt through the dark valley, he will go with thee: in the hour of diſſolving nature, he will ſupport thy ſpirit. Thou canſt not go but where God is. Around thee is infinite love, and underneath thee are the everlaſting arms.

SERMON IX.

PROVERBS iv. 18.

The path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

HUMAN life has been often compared to a journey, for this as well as for other reaſons, that we are always making progreſs in our way. In whatever path we ſet out, there is no ſtanding ſtill. Evil men wax worſe and worſe: the corruptions of their nature gather ſtrength: the vices which they have contracted grow into habit; the evil principle is for ever on the increaſe, till having attained the aſcendant over the whole man, it ſubjects him entirely to its own power, the willing and obedient ſervant of ſin. Good men, on the other hand, make advances in the paths of righteouſneſs. The grace of God, which is given unto them, lies not dormant. The better mind with which they are endowed, incites them to virtue: the new nature which they have put on, pants after perfection. They give all diligence to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue temperance, and to temperance brotherly kindneſs, and to brotherly kindneſs charity, until having abounded in every good work, they perfect holineſs in the fear of the Lord. Such a life is here called the *path of the juſt*. By the juſt in Scripture, are not meant thoſe who merely abſtain from doing unjuſt and injurious things to their neighbours.

The juſt man is he who poſſeſſes that ſincerity of heart, and that integrity of the whole life which God requires of man.

The life of ſuch a man is here compared to the light of the morning. Nothing in nature is more lovely than the light. When the Spirit began to move upon the face of the deep, light was the firſt effect of his creating power; and when the ſix days' work was finiſhed, light collected and centred in the ſun, continued to be the grandeſt and moſt beautiful work of nature; ſo grand and beautiful, that among many of the heathen nations it was worſhipped as the viſible divinity of the world. What light is to the face of external nature, the beauty of holineſs is to the ſoul. It is the brighteſt ornament of an immortal ſpirit; it throws a glory over all the faculties of man; and forms that robe of beauty with which *they* ſhine, who walk in *white* before the throne of God.

But it is chiefly on account of its progreſſive nature, that the path of the juſt is here compared to the ſhining light. In order to illuſtrate this, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, ſhow you how we ſhall know if we have made progreſs in the paths of righteouſneſs. *Secondly*, Give you ſome directions how to make further progreſs. *Thirdly*, Exhort you to a life of progreſſive virtue.

I am firſt then to ſhow how we ſhall know if we have made progreſs in the paths of righteouſneſs.

In the *firſt* place, let me aſk you, are you ſenſible of your faults and imperfections? The firſt indication of wiſdom is to confeſs our ignorance, and the firſt ſtep to virtue is to be ſenſible of our own imper-

fections. The novice in ſcience is puffed up with his early diſcoveries; when the firſt ray of wiſdom is let in upon his mind, he thinks that by it he can ſee and know all things. Deeper views and maturer reflection convince him how little he knows. In like manner, he knows little of religion, and has been but a ſhort time in the ſchool of Chriſt, who is blind to his own imperfections. Our fall from innocence was by pride, and we muſt riſe by humility. "He that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted," is the doctrine which our Lord delivered upon all occaſions. Till we feel our own weakneſs, we can never be ſtrong in the Lord; we never can riſe in the Divine ſight, till we ſink in our own eſtimation. We often meet with perſons in life, who talk very ſtrangely upon this ſubject. They tell us that they are as good as ever they expect to be: that in looking back upon their paſt life, they ſee nothing done which they would wiſh undone; and that if they were to begin life anew, they would act preciſely as they have acted. Concerning ſuch perſons, we may ſafely pronounce that they have made but little progreſs in the path of the juſt. They are ſtrangers to their own hearts, and have not proper ideas of the Divine law. They meaſure the law of God by the laws of men, and think that if their external conduct is blameleſs, they have acted their part well: not conſidering that the law of God extends to the heart, and puniſhes for the omiſſion of duty as well as for the commiſſion of ſin. Such errors the Phariſees taught of old; and ſuch notions of duty Paul had imbibed before his converſion to chriſtianity. "After the ſtraiteſt ſect of our religion," ſays he,

" I lived a Phariſee; touching the law, blameleſs.—" I was alive without the law once:" that is, when I did not know the law in its true ſenſe, I thought myſelf alive, and a ſaint. The Phariſaical doctrines in which he had been educated, taught him that God required no more than a conformity of the external behaviour to the letter of the law. But when he diſcovered that the Divine law extended to the heart; when thus in its power, the commandment came; " ſin revived and I died;" then I ſaw myſelf to be a ſinner, and died to the ſelf-conceit which I formerly entertained.

Secondly, Let me aſk you what is the ſtrength of your attachment to the cauſe of righteouſneſs? As you are ſenſible of your faults, and have ſeen the deformity of ſin, are you enamoured with the beauty of holineſs? Do you deſire nothing more earneſtly than to put on the graces of the Goſpel, and be conformed to the image of God? Men will never imitate what they do not love; if then you are not lovers of goodneſs and virtue, you never will be good and virtuous. So long as they keep to generals, men may eaſily deceive themſelves. Let us then come to particulars, and let me aſk you with what regard and eſtimation you view thoſe patterns of piety which you ſee exhibited in life. Are the good and the righteous, to you the *excellent ones* of the earth? The wiſe do not proportion their reſpect to men according to the rank they hold, or the name they bear in the world. It is the character of the juſt man, as drawn in Scripture, that he ſcorneth the vile, however exalted, and honoreth them that fear the Lord, however depreſſed. Do you then ſcorn

the vile man, with all his attributes of rank and wealth and power? Do you deſpiſe the rich, the noble, the right honorable villain, and chooſe for your companion the righteous man, although he has not where to lay his head? Could you ſit down with virtue in her cell, contented with her homely fare, with her poor abode, and look down with a generous contempt upon the ſplendid roof, where luxury and guilt lead on the feſtive hours? When you behold the wicked great in power, and flouriſhing like a green bay-tree, does your heart revolt from giving him that homage which the favours of mammon never fail to extort from the venal multitude, and can you ſay, in the ſincerity of your heart, "I would "not exchange the peace of my own mind for the "wealth of the world? Whatever thou art pleaſed to "give, Father Almighty, may I poſſeſs it with honor: "the world approaches to thine altar, and bends be- "fore thy throne for temporal bleſſings; the prayer "of my heart is, *Lord lift up on me the light of thy* "*countenance.*"

Thirdly, Let me aſk you, are your reſolutions as firm, and your application as vigorous now as when you firſt ſet out in the ſpiritual life? There are times in which all men are ſerious; in which the moſt obdurate minds feel impreſſions of religion, and in which perſons of the moſt abandoned character form reſolutions of amendment. With all the zeal of new converts, they ſet about a thorough reformation. They wonder how they have been ſo long blind to their true intereſt; they mourn over the time that they have loſt in vain, or in ſinful purſuits, and now ſeem fully determined to follow religion as the one

thing needful. With many, this courſe continues not long; the firſt new object engages their attention, and turns them aſide from the path of the juſt. But true religion, my friends, does not conſiſt in ſuch fits and ſtarts of devotion; in random reſolutions made in the fervour of zeal; in the wavering, deſultory and inconſiſtent conduct which marks the character of multitudes in the world. He alone is a good man who perſeveres in goodneſs. When the vernal year begins, and the ſhower of ſummer deſcends, all nature burſts into vegetable life; the noxious weeds rival the trees among which they grow; but theſe ſudden growths as ſuddenly diſappear; while favoured by the influences of heaven, the trees ariſe to their full ſtature, and bring forth their fruit in ſeaſon. Are you then as much in earneſt now, as when your firſt love to God began to bring forth the fruits of righteouſneſs? Without this undiminiſhed ardour; without theſe unremitting efforts, you never will run the race ſet before you, ſo as to finiſh your courſe with joy. At the ſame time, I muſt take notice, that as you advance in years, all the paſſions will gradually cool. When therefore the fervour of youth has ſubſided, and mature age hath given a ſober caſt to the temper, you will not feel that degree of ardour in your devotions which you experienced in your early years. Many ſerious perſons have been alarmed at this appearance, not conſidering that it was the effect of their conſtitution, and not a mark of apoſtacy from God. But your devotion will continue as ſincere, though not ſo inflamed, as before, and religion will be as effectual as ever in the regulation of your life; like a mighty river, be-

fore it terminates its courſe in the ocean, it rolls with greater calmneſs, but at the ſame time with a greater ſtrength, than when it aroſe from its ſource.

Fourthly, Another mark of increaſing grace is when you obey the Divine commandments from affection and love. They who, from the fear of hell, put on a form of religion for a time, find it to be a hard and a painful ſervice. They are out of their place when they ſtrike into the path of the juſt; they conſider religion as a heavy burden, which they would not bear but from neceſſity, and look upon the duties of the chriſtian life as ſo many taſks which they have to perform. Whoever entertains ſuch notions of religion, will not riſe to high attainments in righteouſneſs. The paſſions and affections are the powerful ſprings of action in the ſoul; and unleſs theſe are put in motion, the machine will move heavily along. He alone will make progreſs in the path of the juſt, who is drawn by the cords of love. Pleaſant are the labours of love; and ſweet is the precept when the duty pleaſes. The yoke is eaſy, and the burden light, when the heart goes along. The chriſtian is not a ſlave who obeys from compulſion, or a ſervant who works for hire: he is a ſon who acts from filial affection, and is happieſt when he obeys. The love of Chriſt alone conſtraineth him. The beauty of holineſs allureth him: Though rewards and puniſhments were ſet aſide, he would follow religion and virtue for their own ſake, and do his duty, becauſe therein he found his happineſs. Do you then, my friends, feel this affection, this paſſion for righteouſneſs? Can you ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "How do "I love thy laws, O Lord? They are my meditation

" all the day. More to be deſired they are than " gold, than much fine gold ; ſweeter than honey " from the honeycomb."

I now come to the *ſecond* thing propoſed, To give you ſome directions how to make further progreſs in the path of the juſt.

In the *firſt* place, then, in order to this, make a ſerious buſineſs of a holy life. There are many perſons in the world who give a ſanction to piety by their example, but who feel very little of its power. They think religion an exceedingly decent thing ; they ſee it patroniſed by all wiſe men, and they know it to be neceſſary for the purpoſes of ſociety. For theſe reaſons they follow the faith, and conform to the uſages of their fathers ; they pay a proper reſpect to the inſtitutions of the church ; and they attend upon the ordinances of Divine worſhip with all the marks of external reverence. So far their conduct is not only decent, but laudable. But if they go no further than this ; if they confine their ſanctity to theſe walls ; if they think that they have done their duty, when they have complied with the external ceremonies of the church, and have adopted this as the eaſieſt and moſt compendious method of being religious ; the religion of ſuch perſons is rather a kind of good manners, than real devotion. The true chriſtian will not be deficient in his attention to the externals of religion ; but he will not reſt there ; he will attend upon the ordinances of public worſhip, not becauſe it is the cuſtom of the country, but becauſe it is his duty to God ; and he will obſerve the inſtitutions of chriſtianity ; not from complaiſance to eſtabliſhed uſages, but from a ſincere deſire of ma-

king progreſs in righteouſneſs. We muſt make piety more than a matter of form; we muſt make a ſtudy of a holy life, in order to advance from ſtrength to ſtrength in the ways of the Lord. It is with religion, my friends, as with the other purſuits of life. In thoſe arts where ſucceſs depends upon genius and induſtry, unleſs a man have an enthuſiaſm for his own profeſſion, unleſs he follow it from choice, and prefer it to all others, he will never riſe to eminence and fame. In like manner, unleſs a man have an attachment of the heart to the cauſe of virtue; unleſs he be fervent in ſpirit to ſerve the Lord; unleſs he prefer a good conſcience to every thing upon earth, he will never obtain that crown of glory which is reſerved for the righteous. In his journey through life, the pilgrim may turn aſide to behold a beautiful ſcene, or enjoy a paſſing delight; but he will never forget that his chief object is his journey to the promiſed land.

In order to attain eminence in the arts juſt mentioned, the candidate devotes his beſt and happieſt years; lives laborious days and reſtleſs nights; makes a ſacrifice of eaſe, and health, and ſocial joy; and at laſt conſoles himſelf by the triumphant proſpect of lying down upon the bed of fame, and living to future ages. If, then, ſtudies of inferior importance become ſuch a ſerious concern; if the deſire of an imaginary immortality has ſuch power over the mind; will this nobleſt of ſtudies, the ſcience of being good, have no attraction for the ſoul? will this paſſion for a real immortality have no power over the heart? Under the influence of this principle, will not every one who has the faith of a chriſ-

tian, or the feelings of a man, join with the Apoſtle, "Yea, doubtleſs, I count all things but loſs, for the "excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my "Lord, that I may know him, and the power of "his reſurrection, and the fellowſhip of his ſuffer-"ings, being made conformable to his death; if by "any means I may attain to the reſurrection of the "dead?" Under the influence of theſe principles, will not every perſon who deſires to make advances in the path of the juſt, adopt alſo the reſolution of Job, "While my breath is in me, and the Spirit of "God is in my noſtrils, my lips ſhall not ſpeak "wickedneſs, nor my tongue utter deceit; till I die "I will not remove mine integrity from me. My "righteouſneſs I hold faſt, and will not let it go; "my heart ſhall not reproach me ſo long as I live?"

In the *ſecond* place, In order to make progreſs in the path of the juſt, you muſt never reſt ſatisfied with any degrees of holineſs or virtue which you attain. The law of the ſpiritual life is to aim at perfection: the intention of chriſtianity is that we may ſtand perfect and complete in all the will of God. "As "he who hath called you is holy, be ye holy in all "manner of converſation." Abſolutely perfect, indeed, we can never become in this life; but we muſt be always aſpiring and endeavouring after perfection. There is no end of your journey till you come to heaven; there is no place by the way where you are to expect a termination from labour, or a period of repoſe. It is not uncommon to hear perſons expreſs themſelves in terms of great indifference about the higher attainments in ſanctity and virtue. They ſeem to be much afraid of being better than their

neighbours; they have no ambition, they ſay, to be ſaints; they do not deſire to rank among the very beſt; and they would be content with the loweſt place in heaven. Happy, beyond all controverſy, ſhall he be, who ſhall obtain a place, though the loweſt, in the heavenly manſions; but for men to mark out to themſelves boundaries in the path of virtue, beyond which they are reſolved not to go; for men, with impious preſumption, to cut out to themſelves juſt ſuch a portion of duty as they think will entitle them to an ineſtimable reward; this is undervaluing the pearl of great price; it is ſacrificing the riches of the Divine goodneſs to their own indolence; it is doing deſpite to that Spirit of grace which might have been a powerful principle of advancing holineſs in the heart. Had he to whom in the parable ten talents were given, gained no more than he to whom five were given, can you think that he would have obtained the title, and received the reward of a good and faithful ſervant? No, but of a ſlothful and unprofitable one, who had not improved aright the depoſite of his Maſter. What ſaith the Apoſtle upon this ſubject? "Brethren, I count not "myſelf to have apprehended;" to have already attained perfection; "but this one thing I do; for- "getting the things which are behind, and reaching "forth unto thoſe things which are before, I preſs "toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling "of God in Chriſt Jeſus."

"Forgetting the things that are behind," ſaith the Apoſtle. What things had this Apoſtle to forget? He had to forget his labours in the courſe of his apoſtolical functions, his unwearied zeal, his un-

remitting induſtry, in diſcharging the truſt committed to him; his perilous journeys and voyages over the greateſt part of the known world, to propagate the religion of Jeſus; the many noted perſons he converted by his miniſtry; the many flouriſhing churches he erected in the courſe of his travels; the many famous nations he brought over to the chriſtian faith. He had to forget what of all things the beſt men pride themſelves moſt in, the perſecutions which he ſuffered for the ſake of the Lord; the impriſonments which he endured, the wounds which he received, and the ſtripes which he bore, as a witneſs of truth and a preacher of righteouſneſs. He had to forget that he was not behind the very chiefeſt Apoſtles; the many miracles which he wrought; the frequent revelations that were made to him. He had to forget that, in the viſion of God, he had aſcended unto the third heaven, and was admitted to ſcenes, the beauties and the joys of which, eye hath not ſeen, ear hath not heard, and the heart of man cannot conceive. If, notwithſtanding ſuch a high degree of grace and favour; if, after a life of ſuch extraordinary piety, this Apoſtle forgot the things which were behind, and reaching forth to the things which were before, preſſed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus, where is the man who can pretend to ſay, "I "am already as perfect as I can ever expect to be?" Where is the man who is entitled to ſet a boundary to himſelf in the path of righteouſneſs, ſaying, "Hi-"therto ſhall I go, but no further?"

In the *third* place, In order to make progreſs in the path of the juſt, be always employed in the im-

provement of your ſouls. There is no ſtanding ſtill in the path to heaven. Your evil habits, thoſe cords that hold you in captivity to ſin, you may not perhaps be able to caſt away at once; but through the Divine grace you will inſenſibly weaken, and at laſt break them aſunder. Your inclinations that may have taken a wrong bent, you may counteract, and at laſt recover to their original rectitude. Where nature favours a particular exertion, or habit has formed you to a particular virtue, the one you may cheriſh, the other you may cultivate; upon both, the fruits of righteouſneſs will grow. Afterwards, be ſtill attending to the culture of the ſoul, and meditating improvements, by calling forth graces that have not yet made their appearance, and bringing forward to perfection thoſe that have. Thus will your minds reſemble thoſe trees, in which, at one and the ſame time, we behold ſome fruits arrived at full maturity; ſome half advanced; and others juſt formed in the opening bloſſom. By cultivating theſe graces in the ſoul, you will not only have an earneſt, but alſo an image of heaven. The trees which thus grow up by the rivers of water, which bring forth their fruit in their ſeaſon, and whoſe leaves continue ever green, ſhall be tranſplanted to happier climes, to adorn the paradiſe of God.

In the *fourth* and *laſt* place, In order to make your endeavours effectual, you muſt abound in prayer to God for the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit. "No man "becomes good without the Divine influence. No "man can riſe above the infirmities of nature, un-"leſs aided by God. He inſpires great and noble "purpoſes. In every good man God reſides. The

" ſtrength which renders a man ſuperior to all thoſe " things which the people either hope or dread, de- " ſcends from him. So lofty a ſtructure cannot " ſtand unſupported by the Divinity." Theſe, my friends, are the words of a heathen, and expreſs a doctrine equally agreeable to reaſon and to revelation. In conſequence of our corrupted nature, we are unable of ourſelves to produce the virtues and graces of the Divine life. But we are not left without a remedy. In the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, aids are promiſed from above, to repair the ruins of our nature, and to reſtore the powers of the ſoul. God hath not forſaken the earth. As at the firſt of days, the Divine Spirit is ſtill moving over the world to produce life. The Lord is ever nigh to them who call upon him in the ſincerity of their heart. While we ſtrive againſt ſin, we may ſafely expect that the Divinity will ſtrive with us, and impart that ſtrength and power which will at laſt make us more than conquerors. As he who continues in wicked devices ſhall be ſure to find Satan ſtanding at his right hand; ſo he who begins a good life, ſhall find God befriending him with ſecret aid. He will aſſiſt the ſpirit that is ſtruggling to break looſe from the bonds of its captivity; he will aid the flight of the ſoul that is taking wing to the celeſtial manſions; he will ſupport our feeble frame under the trials and conflicts to which we are appointed, and lead us on from grace to grace, till we appear in Zion above. " They that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their " ſtrength; they ſhall mount up as on eagles' wings; " they ſhall run and not be weary; they ſhall walk, " and not be faint."

I come now to the *laſt* thing propoſed: to exhort you to a life of progreſſive virtue.

In the *firſt* place, then, it is your duty to make progreſs in the ways of righteouſneſs. In your ſanctification you are enabled more and more to die unto ſin, and live unto righteouſneſs. It is not enough that you continue ſtedfaſt and immoveable; you muſt alſo abound in the work of the Lord, if you expect your labours to be attended with ſucceſs. It is not ſufficient that you *continue* in well-doing; you muſt alſo grow in grace, and increaſe with all the increaſe of God. This progreſſive nature of righteouſneſs is implied in all the figures and images by which a good life is repreſented in Sacred Scripture. It is compared to the leaſt of all ſeeds, which waxes to a great tree, and ſpreads out its branches, and fills the earth. It is compared to the morning light, at firſt faintly dawning over the mountains, by degrees enlightening the face of the earth, aſcending higher and higher in the heavens, and ſhining more and more unto the perfect day. We are ſaid to be here at the ſchool of Chriſt; and in order to attain the character of good diſciples, we muſt not only retain what we have acquired, but alſo add to the acquiſitions we have made. The chriſtian life is repreſented as a warfare, and in this warfare we ſhall never gain the victory, unleſs we not only maintain the ground we have got, but alſo gain upon the foe. It is repreſented as a race ſet before us, and in running it we muſt continually preſs forward, or we ſhall never gain the prize. Every degree of grace which you receive, and every pitch of virtue to which you attain, is a talent for which you are accountable:

a talent which if you only retain, but not improve, you will receive the doom of a ſlothful and wicked ſervant, and be caſt into outer darkneſs. The chriſtian life is a life of continued exertion. At every ſtage in our pilgrimage on earth, new ſcenes will open; new ſituations will preſent themſelves; and new paths to glory will be ſtruck out. The ſphere of action varies continually. We have, one while, to ſupport adverſity; another while, to adorn proſperity; ſometimes to approve ourſelves to God in ſolitude; at other times to cauſe our light to ſhine before men in ſociety. Different ſituations in the world, and different periods of life, require the exerciſe of different virtues. What is accepted from the young ſoldier will not be excuſed in the veteran; what is an "ornament of grace" to the youthful brow will not be a "crown of glory" to the hoary head.

Secondly, Let me exhort you to this life of progreſſive virtue, from the pleaſing conſideration that you will be ſucceſsful in the attempt. In the purſuit of human honors and rewards, the ſucceſsful candidates are few. In a race many run, but one only gains the prize. But here all who run may obtain. In the career of human glory, time and chance happen unto all, and many are diſappointed. "The "race is not always to the ſwift, nor the battle to "the ſtrong; nor riches to men of underſtanding; "nor favour to men of ſkill." There is a concurrence of circumſtances required to raiſe a man to reputation; and when theſe circumſtances concur, if the moment of opportunity be not embraced, the field of glory may be loſt for ever. In human life there is a favourable hour which never returns, and a call

to fame, which is repeated no more. Even in its beſt eſtate, men ought to lay their account with diſappointment and vexation. What thou haſt ſet thy heart upon from thy youth; what has been the aim of all thy labours; what has been the object of thy whole life, accident, artifice, ignorance, villany, caprice, may give to another whom thou knoweſt not. When thy ambition is all on fire; in the utmoſt ardour of expectation, in the very moment when thou ſtretcheſt out thy hand to graſp the prize, fortune may ſnatch it from thy reach for ever. Nay, thou mayeſt have the mortification to ſee others riſe upon thy ruins, to ſee thyſelf made a ſtep to the ambition of thy rival, and thy endeavours rendered the means of advancing him to the top of the wheel, while thou continueſt low.

In the purſuits of ambition or avarice, you may be diſappointed; but if by a progreſſive ſtate of righteouſneſs, you ſeek for glory and honor and immortality, I in the name of God aſſure you of ſucceſs. Never was the gate of mercy ſhut againſt the true penitent; never was the prayer of the faithful rejected in the temple of Heaven; never did the incenſe of a good life aſcend without acceptance on high. Liberal and unreſtricted is the Divine benignity: free to all the fountain flows. There is no angel with a flaming ſword to keep you from the tree of life. At this moment of time, there is a voice from Heaven calling to you, "Come up hither." And if you are obedient to the call, God aſſiſts you with the aids of his Spirit; he lifts up the hands that hang down; he ſtrengthens the feeble knees, and perfects his ſtrength in your weakneſs. You

are not left alone to climb the arduous aſcent. God is with you, who never ſuffers the ſpirit which reſts on him to fail; nor the man who ſeeks his favour, to ſeek it in vain. Your ſucceſs in the path of the juſt will not only be pleaſing to yourſelves, but alſo to all around you. In the ſtruggles of human ambition, the triumph of one ariſes upon the ſorrows of another; many are diſappointed when one obtains the prize. But in the path of the juſt, there is emulation without envy, triumph without diſappointment. The ſucceſs of one increaſes the happineſs of all. The influence of ſuch an event is not confined to the earth: it is communicated to all good beings; it adds to the harmony of the Heavens; and is the occaſion of new hoſannahs among the innumerable company of angels and ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, who rejoice over the ſinner that repenteth.

Thirdly, Let me exhort you to make advances in the path of righteouſneſs, from the beauty and the pleaſantneſs of ſuch a progreſs. Whatever difficulties may have attended your firſt entrance upon the path of the juſt, they will vaniſh by degrees; the ſteepneſs of the mountain will leſſen as you aſcend; the path, in which you have been accuſtomed to walk, will grow more and more beautiful; and the celeſtial manſions, to which you tend, will brighten with new ſplendour, the nearer that you approach them. In other affairs, continued exertion may occaſion laſſitude and fatigue. Labour may be carried to ſuch an exceſs as to debilitate the body. The purſuits of knowledge may be carried ſo far as to impair the mind; but neither the organs of the body, nor the faculties of the ſoul, can be endangered by

the practice of religion. On the contrary, this practice ſtrengthens the powers of action. Adding virtue to virtue is adding ſtrength to ſtrength; and the greater acquiſitions we make, we are enabled to make ſtill greater. How pleaſant will it be to mark the ſoul thus moving forward in the brightneſs of its courſe! In the ſpring, who does not love to mark the progreſs of nature; the flower unfolding into beauty, the fruit coming forward to maturity, the fields advancing to the pride of harveſt, and the months revolving into the perfect year? Who does not love in the human ſpecies, to obſerve the progreſs to maturity; the infant by degrees growing up to man; the young idea beginning to ſhoot, and the embryo character beginning to unfold? But if theſe things affect us with delight; if the proſpect of external nature in its progreſs, if the flower unfolding unto beauty, if the fruit coming forward to maturity, if the infant by degrees growing up to man, and the embryo character beginning to unfold, affect us with pleaſurable ſenſations, how much greater delight will it afford to obſerve the progreſs of this new creation, the growth of the ſoul in the graces of the divine life, good reſolutions ripening into good actions, good actions leading to confirmed habits of virtue, and the new nature advancing from the firſt lineaments of virtue to the full beauty of holineſs! Theſe are pleaſures that time will not take away. While the animal ſpirits fail, and the joys which depend upon the livelineſs of the paſſions decline with years, the ſolid comforts of a holy life, the delights of virtue and a good conſcience, will be a new ſource of happineſs in old age, and have a

charm for the end of life. As the ſtream flows pleaſanteſt when it approaches the ocean; as the flowers ſend up their ſweeteſt odours at the cloſe of the day; as the ſun appears with greateſt beauty in his going down; ſo at the end of his career, the virtues and graces of a good man's life come before him with the moſt bleſſed remembrance, and impart a joy which he never felt before. Over all the moments of life, religion ſcatters her favours, but reſerves her beſt, her choiceſt, her divineſt bleſſings for the laſt hour.

In the *laſt* place, Let me exhort you to this progreſſive ſtate of virtue, from the pleaſant conſideration that it has no period. There are limits and boundaries ſet to all human affairs. There is an ultimate point in the progreſs, beyond which they never go, and from which they return in a contrary direction. The flower bloſſoms but to fade, and all terreſtrial glory ſhines to diſappear. Human life has its decline as well as its maturity; from a certain period the external ſenſes begin to decay, and the faculties of the mind to be impaired, till duſt returns unto duſt. Nations have their day. States and kingdoms are mortal like their founders. When they have arrived at the zenith of their glory, from that moment they begin to decline; the bright day is ſucceeded by a long night of darkneſs, ignorance and barbarity. But in the progreſs of the mind to intellectual and moral perfection, there is no period ſet. Beyond theſe Heavens the perfection and happineſs of the juſt is carrying on; is carrying on, but ſhall never come to a cloſe. God ſhall behold his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes; for ever

drawing nearer to himſelf, yet ſtill infinitely diſtant from the fountain of all goodneſs. There is not in religion a more joyful and triumphant conſideration than this perpetual progreſs which the ſoul makes to the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at its ultimate period. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, preſents to us a conception ſo elevating and aſtoniſhing, as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified ſpirit as going on from ſtrength to ſtrength; adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; making approaches to goodneſs which is infinite; for ever adorning the Heavens with new beauties, and brightening in the ſplendours of moral glory through all the ages of eternity, has ſomething in it ſo tranſcendent and ineffable, as to ſatisfy the moſt unbounded ambition of an immortal ſpirit. Chriſtian! Does not thy heart glow at the thought, that there is a time marked out in the annals of Heaven, when thou ſhalt be what the angels now are; when thou ſhalt ſhine with that glory in which principalities and powers now appear; and when, in the full communion of the Moſt High, thou ſhalt ſee him as he is!

The oak, whoſe top aſcends unto the heavens, and which covers the mountains with its ſhade, was once an acorn, contemptible to the ſight; the philoſopher, whoſe views extend from one end of nature to the other, was once a ſpeechleſs infant hanging at the breaſt; the glorified ſpirits, who now ſtand neareſt to the throne of God, were once like you. To you as to them the Heavens are open; the way is marked out; the reward is prepared. On what you do, on what you now do, all depends.

SERMON X.

MATTHEW v. 5.

Bleſſed are the meek, for they ſhall inherit the earth.

THEY miſtake the nature of the chriſtian religion very much, who conſider it as ſeparate and detached from the commerce of the world. Inſtead of forming a diſtinct profeſſion, it is intimately connected with life; it reſpects men as acting in ſociety, and contains regulations for their conduct and behaviour in ſuch a ſtate. It takes in the whole of human life, and is intended to influence us when we are in the houſe, and in the field, as well as when we are in the church or in the cloſet. It inſtructs men in their duty to their neighbours, as well as in their duty to God; it is our companion in the ſcene of buſineſs as well as in the Houſe of Prayer; and while it inculcates the weightier matters of the law, faith, judgment, and mercy, it neglects not the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which in the ſight of God is of great price. All that refinement which poliſhes the mind; all that gentleneſs of manners which ſweetens the intercourſe of human ſociety, which political philoſophers conſider as the effects of wiſe legiſlation and good government; all the virtues of domeſtic life, are leſſons which are taught in the chriſtian ſchool. The wiſdom that cometh from above is "gentle." The fruit of the Spirit is "meekneſs." As the ſun, although he

regulates the ſeaſons, leads on the year, and diſpenſes light and life to all the planetary worlds, yet diſdains not to raiſe and to beautify the flower which opens in his beams; ſo the chriſtian religion, though chiefly intended to teach us the knowledge of ſalvation, and be our guide to happineſs (on high,) yet alſo regulates our converſation in the world, extends its benign influence to the circle of ſociety, and diffuſes its bleſſed fruits in the path of domeſtic life.

In farther treating upon this ſubject, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, Deſcribe to you the character of meekneſs which is here recommended; and, in the *ſecond* place, Show you the happineſs with which it is attended. I am, in the *firſt* place, then, To deſcribe to you the character of meekneſs which is here recommended.

Every virtue, whether of natural or revealed religion, is ſituated between ſome vices or defects, which though eſſentially different, yet bear ſome reſemblance to the virtue they counterfeit; on account of which reſemblance they obtain its name, and impoſe upon thoſe who labour under the want of diſcernment. This meekneſs which is here recommended, is not at all the ſame with that courteſy of manners which is learned in the ſchool of the world. That is but a ſuperficial accompliſhment, and often proceeds from a hollowneſs of heart. It is alſo quite different from conſtitutional facility, that undeciding ſtate of the mind which eaſily bends to every propoſal; that is a weakneſs, and not a virtue. Neither does it at all reſemble that tame and paſſive temper which patiently bears inſults and ſubmits to injuries. That is a want of ſpirit, and argues a cow-

ardly mind. This meekneſs is a chriſtian grace wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. It is a ſtream from the fountain of all excellence. A good temper, a good education, and juſt views of religion, muſt concur in forming this bleſſed ſtate of the mind. It becomes a principle which influences the whole life. Though conſiſtent in all its operations with boldneſs and with ſpirit, yet its chief characteriſtics are goodneſs and gentleneſs and long-ſuffering. It looks with candour upon all; often condeſcends to the prejudices of the weak, and often forgives the errors of the fooliſh.

But to give you a more particular view of it, we may place it in three capital lights, as it reſpects our general behaviour, our conduct to our enemies, and our conduct to our friends.

With reſpect to his general behaviour, the meek man looks upon all his neighbours with a candid eye. The two great maxims on which he proceeds, are, not to give offence, and not to take offence. He enters not with the keenneſs of paſſion into the contentions of violent men: he keeps aloof from the contagion of party-madneſs, and feels not the little paſſions which agitate little minds. He wiſhes and he ſtudies to allay the angry paſſions of the contending; to moderate the fierceneſs of the implacable; to reconcile his neighbours to one another; and, as far as lies in his power, to make all mankind one great family of friends. He will not indeed deſcend one ſtep from the dignity of his character; nor will he ſacrifice the dictates of his own conſcience to any conſideration whatever. But thoſe points of obſtinacy, which the world are apt to call points of honor,

he will freely and cheerfully give up for the good of ſociety. He loves to live in peace with all mankind: but this deſire too has its limits. He will keep no terms with thoſe who keep no terms with virtue. A villain, of whatever ſtation, of whatever religious profeſſion, he deteſts as abomination. Thus you ſee that though ſoftneſs, and gentleneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, are the chief characteriſtics of this virtue, yet at the ſame time it is very conſiſtent with exertions of ſpirit. When it acts, it acts with vigour and deciſion. Moſes, who has the teſtimony of the Divine Spirit, that he was the meekeſt man upon the face of the earth, yet when occaſion preſented itſelf, felt the influence of an elevated temper, and ſlew the Egyptian who was wounding his countryman. A meeker than Moſes, even our Lord himſelf, though gentle and beneficent to all the ſons of men, yet when the worldly-minded Jews profaned the temple, he was moved with juſt indignation, and drove the impious from the Houſe of God. Nothing is often more calm and ſerene than the face of the heavens; but when guilt provokes the vengeance of the Moſt High, *forth comes the thunder* to blaſt the devoted head.

Such is the influence of meekneſs on our general behaviour. It ought alſo to regulate our conduct to our enemies. There is no principle which more ſtrongly operates in human nature than the law of retaliation. This appears from the laws of nations in the early ſtate, which always ordained a puniſhment ſimilar to the offence; eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and life for life. This appears alſo from our own feelings; when an injury is done us, we natur-

ally long for revenge. Our heart tells us, that the perſon offending ought to ſuffer for the offence, and that the hand of him who was injured, muſt return the blow. Such are the dictates of the natural temper. But purſue this principle to its full extent, and you will ſee where it will end. One man commits an action which is injurious to you; you feel yourſelf aggrieved, and ſeek revenge. If you then retaliate upon him, he thinks he has received a new injury, which he alſo ſeeks to revenge; and thus a foundation is laid for reciprocal animoſities without end. Did this principle and this practice become general, the earth would be a field of battle, life would be a ſcene of bloodſhed, and hoſtilities would be immortal. Legiſlative wiſdom hath provided a remedy for theſe diſorders, and for this havock, which would be made of the human ſpecies. The right of private vengeance, which every man is born with, by common conſent, and for the public good, is reſigned into the hands of the civil magiſtrate. But there are many things which come not under the juriſdiction of the laws, and the cognizance of the magiſtrate, which tend to diſturb the public peace, and ſet mankind at variance. Private animoſities and little quarrels often ariſe, which might be productive of great diſorder and detriment to ſociety. Here, therefore, where legiſlative wiſdom fails, religion ſteps in and checks the deſire of vengeance, by enjoining that meekneſs of ſpirit which diſpoſes not to retaliate, but to forgive. He, therefore, who poſſeſſes this ſpirit, will not anſwer a fool according to his folly. He will not depart from his uſual maxims of conduct, becauſe another has behaved im-

properly. Becauſe his neighbour has been guilty of one piece of folly, he will not reckon that an inducement for him to be guilty of another. He will regulate his conduct by that ſtandard of virtue, which is within, and not by the behaviour of thoſe around him. Accordingly, inſtead of harbouring animoſities againſt thoſe who have done him ill offices, he will be diſpoſed to return good for evil: remembering that our Lord adds at the concluſion of this chapter, "I ſay unto you, love your enemies, that ye "may be the children of your Father which is in "Heaven; for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the "evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt "and on the unjuſt."

This meekneſs ought alſo to appear in our conduct towards our friends. In the preſent ſtate of things, where human nature is ſo frail, where the very beſt have their weak ſide, and where ſo many events happen, which give occaſion to the paſſions of men to ſhow themſelves, there is great ſcope for the exerciſe of meekneſs and moderation. The faults of mankind, in general, preſent a moſt unpleaſant ſpectacle; but the failings of thoſe we love, of thoſe on whom we have conferred obligations, are apt to fill us with diſguſt and averſion. If it had been an enemy who had done this, I could have borne it. I would have expected no better; but thou, O my familiar friend, how ſhall I forgive thee? Such, at the time, is the language of nature. But better views, and more mature reflection, will teach us to throw a veil over thoſe infirmities which are inſeparable from the beſt natures, and to frame an excuſe for thoſe errors, which proceed not from a bad heart.

In all theſe inſtances of meekneſs, Jeſus of Nazareth left us an example, that we ſhould follow his ſteps. In his general behaviour, he was meek, and lowly, and condeſcending. He went about doing good, and received teſtimony from his enemies, that "he did all things well." To the errors of his friends, he was mild and gentle. When, moved by falſe zeal, in which they are ſtill followed by many, who have the aſſurance to call themſelves his diſciples, they beſought him to cauſe fire to deſcend from heaven, and conſume a city, which believed not in his doctrines, all the rebuke he adminiſtered was, "Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; "the Son of Man came not to deſtroy men's lives, "but to ſave them." When he ſuffered his agony in the garden, in the hour and in the power of darkneſs, when he beſought his diſciples to watch with him in this dreadful ſcene, and when, inſtead of giving him comfort, they ſunk unconcerned into ſleep; inſtead of reproving them with ſeverity, as their conduct deſerved, he himſelf ſought for an excuſe for them: "The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh "is weak." Though he was the friend of all mankind, yet he had enemies who ſought his life. "I "have done," ſaid he, "many good deeds among "you, for which of theſe do you ſtone me?" And when, after perſecuting him in his life, they brought him to the accurſed death of the croſs, his laſt words were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not "what they do." Go thou! and do likewiſe.

The *ſecond* thing propoſed was, To ſhow the happineſs annexed to this character, expreſſed here by "inheriting the earth." The meek are not indeed

always to be great and opulent. Happineſs, God be praiſed, is not annexed, and is not confined, to the ſuperior ſtations of life. There is a great difference between poſſeſſing the good things of life, and enjoying them. Whatever be his rank in life, the meek man bids the faireſt chance for enjoying its advantages. A proud and paſſionate man puts his happineſs in the power of every fool he meets with. A failure in duty or affection from a friend, want of reſpect from a dependant, and a thouſand little circumſtances, which a candid man would overlook, diſturb his repoſe. (He is perpetually on the fret, and his life is one ſcene of anxiety after another.) On the other hand, the meek is not diſturbed by the tranſactions of this ſcene of vanity. He is diſpoſed to be pleaſed at all events. Inſtead of repining at the ſucceſs of thoſe around him, he rejoices in their proſperity, and is thus happy in the happineſs of all his neighbours. Such are the bleſſed effects of meekneſs on the character. This beam from heaven kindles joy within the mind: it ſpreads a ſerenity over the countenance, and diffuſes a kind of ſunſhine over the whole life. It puts us out of the power of accidents. It keeps the world at a due diſtance. It is armour to the mind, and keeps off the arrows of wrath. It preſerves a ſanctuary within, calm and holy, which nothing can diſturb. Safe and happy in this aſylum, you ſmile at the madneſs of the multitude. You hear the tempeſt raging around, and ſpending its ſtrength in vain. As this virtue contributes to our happineſs here, ſo it is alſo the beſt preparation for the happineſs which is above. It is the very temper of the heavens. It is the diſpoſi-

tion of the ſaints in light, and angels in glory; of that bleſſed ſociety of friends, who rejoice in the preſence of God, and who, in mutual love, and joint hoſannahs of praiſe, enjoy the ages of eternity.

To conclude: There is hardly a duty enjoined in the whole book of God, on which more ſtreſs ſeems often to be laid, than this virtue of meekneſs. "The "Lord loveth the meek.—The meek will he beauti- "fy with his ſalvation.—He ariſes to ſave the meek "of the earth." Chriſt was ſent to preach "glad "tidings to the meek." Upon this our Lord reſts his own character. "Learn of me, for I am meek." In the epiſtles of Paul, there is a remarkable expreſ- ſion: "I beſeech you by the meekneſs and the gen- "tleneſs of Chriſt." The Holy Ghoſt too, is call- ed "the Spirit of Meekneſs." Implore then, O Chriſtian! the aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit, that he may endow you with this virtue, and that you may ſhow in your life the meekneſs of wiſdom.

SERMON XI.

ISAIAH lviii. 7.

—Deal thy bread to the hungry :—hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh.

WHY there are ſo many evils in the world, is a queſtion that has been agitated ever ſince men felt them. As God is poſſeſſed of all perfections, he could have created the univerſe without evil. To him, revolving the plan of his creation, every benevolent ſyſtem preſented itſelf; how came it then to paſs, that a Being, neither controlled in power, nor limited in wiſdom, nor deficient in goodneſs, ſhould create a world in which many evils are to be found, and much ſuffering to be endured? It becomes not us, with too preſumptuous a curioſity, to aſſign the cauſes of the Divine conduct, or with too daring a hand, to draw aſide the veil which covers the councils of the Almighty. But from this ſtate of things, we ſee many good effects ariſe. That induſtry which keeps the world in motion; that ſociety, which, by mutual wants, cements mankind together; and that charity, which is the bond of perfection, would neither have a place nor a name, but for the evils of human life. Thus the enjoyments of life are grafted upon its wants; from natural evil ariſes moral good, and the ſufferings of ſome contribute to the happineſs of all. Such being the ſtate of human affairs, charity, or that diſpoſition which leads

us to ſupply the wants and alleviate the ſufferings of unhappy men, as well as bear with their infirmities, muſt be a duty of capital importance. Accordingly it is enjoined in our holy religion, as being the chief of the virtues. There is no duty commanded in Scripture, on which ſo much ſtreſs is laid, as on the duty of charity. It is aſſigned as the teſt and criterion by which we are to diſtinguiſh the diſciples of Jeſus, and it will be ſelected at the great day, as being that part of the character which is moſt deciſive of the life, and according to which the laſt ſentence is to turn. Charity, in its moſt comprehenſive ſenſe, ſignifies that diſpoſition of mind, which, from a regard and gratitude to God, leads to all the good in our power to man. Thus, it takes in a large circle, extending to all the virtues of the ſocial, and many graces of the divine life. But as this would lead us into a wide field, all that I intend at preſent is, to conſider that branch of charity which is called *Almsgiving;* and, in treating upon it, ſhall, in the *firſt* place, Show you how alms ought to be beſtowed; and, *ſecondly*, Give exhortations to the practice of this duty.

The *firſt* thing propoſed was, To ſhow you what is the moſt proper method of beſtowing charity. this inquiry is the more neceſſary, as, in the neighbourhood of great cities, we are always ſurrounded by the needy and importunate, and it is often difficult to diſtinguiſh thoſe who are proper objects of charity, from thoſe who are not.

The beſt method of beſtowing charity upon the healthy and the ſtrong, is to give them employment. Almighty God created us all for induſtry and ac-

tion. He never intended that any man upon the face of the earth ſhould be idle. Accordingly, he hath placed us in a ſtate which abounds with incentives to induſtry, and in which we muſt be active, in order to live. One half of the vices of men take their origin from idleneſs. He who has nothing to do, is an eaſy prey to the tempter. Men muſt have occupation of one kind or other. If they are not employed in uſeful and beneficial labours, they will engage in thoſe which are pernicious and criminal. To ſupport the indolent, therefore, to keep thoſe idle who are able to work, is acting contrary to the intention of God, is doing an injury to ſociety, which claims a right to the ſervices of all its members, is defrauding real objects of charity of that which is their proper due, and is foſtering a race of ſluggards, to prey upon the vitals of a ſtate. But he is a valuable member of ſociety, and merits well of all mankind, who by deviſing means of employment for the induſtrious, delivers the public from an uſeleſs incumbrance, and makes thoſe who would otherwiſe be the peſts of ſociety, uſeful ſubjects of the commonwealth. If it be merit, and no ſmall merit it is, to improve the face of a country; to turn the deſert into a fruitful field, and make the barren waſtes break forth into finging; it is much more meritorious to cultivate the deſerts in the moral world; to render thoſe who might be otherwiſe pernicious members of ſociety, happy in themſelves, and beneficial to the ſtate; to convert the talent that was wrapt up in a napkin into a public uſe; and by opening a new ſource of induſtry, make life and health to circulate through the whole political body. Such a perſon is

a true patriot, and does more good to mankind, than all the heroes and man-deſtroyers, who fill the annals of hiſtory. The fame of the one is founded upon the numbers that he has ſlain; the glory of the other ariſes from the numbers that he preſerves and makes happy.

Another act of charity, of equal importance, is to ſupply the wants of the really indigent and neceſſitous. If the induſtrious, with all their efforts, are not able to earn a competent livelihood; if the produce of their labour be not proportionable to the demands of a numerous family; then they are proper objects of your charity. Nor can there be conceived a more pitiable caſe, than that of thoſe whoſe daily labour, after the utmoſt they can do, will not procure daily bread for themſelves and their houſehold. To conſider a parent who has toiled the livelong day in hardſhip, who yet at night, inſtead of finding reſt, ſhall find a pain more inſupportable than all his fatigues abroad; the cravings of a numerous and helpleſs family, which he cannot ſatisfy: this is ſufficient to give the moſt lively touches of compaſſion to every heart that is not paſt feeling. Nor can there be an exerciſe of charity better judged, than adminiſtering to the wants of thoſe who are at the ſame time induſtrious and indigent.

Another claſs of men that demand our charity, is the aged and feeble, who, after a life of hard labour, after being worn out with the cares and buſineſs of life, are grown unfit for further buſineſs, and who add poverty to the other miſeries of old age. What can be more worthy of us, than thus to contribute to their happineſs, who have been once uſeful, and are ſtill

willing to be ſo; to allow them not to feel the want of thoſe enjoyments, which they are not now able to procure; to be a ſtaff to their declining days; to ſmooth the furrows in the faded cheek, and to make the winter of old age wear the aſpect of ſpring?

Children alſo bereft of their parents, orphans caſt upon the care of Providence, are ſignal objects of compaſſion. To act the part of a father to thoſe upon whoſe helpleſs years no parent of their own ever ſmiled; to rear up the plant that was left alone to periſh in the ſtorm; to fence the tender bloom againſt the early blaſts of vice; to watch and ſuperintend its growth, till it flouriſhes and brings forth fruit: this is a noble and beneficial employment, well adapted to a generous mind. What can be more delightful than thus to train up the young to happineſs and virtue; to conduct them with a ſafe but gentle hand, through the dangerous ſtages of infancy and youth; to give them, at an age when their minds are moſt ſuſceptible of good impreſſions, early notices of religion, and render them uſeful members of ſociety, who, if turned adrift, and left defenceleſs, would, without the extraordinary grace of God, become a burden and a nuiſance to the world?

But there is a claſs of the unfortunate not yet mentioned, who are the greateſt objects of all; thoſe who, after having been accuſtomed to eaſe and plenty, are, by ſome unavoidable reverſe of fortue, by no fault or folly of theirs, condemned to bear, what they are leaſt able to bear, the galling load of poverty; who, after having been perhaps fathers to the fatherleſs, in the day of their proſperity, are now be-

come the objects of that charity which they were wont ſo liberally to diſpenſe. Theſe perſons plead the more ſtrongly for our relief, becauſe they are the leaſt able to reveal their miſery, and make their wants known. Let theſe therefore in a peculiar manner partake the bounty of the liberal and open hand. Let your goodneſs deſcend to them in ſecret, and, like the providence of Heaven, conceal the hand which ſends them relief, that their bluſhes may be ſpared while their wants are ſupplied.

Concerning one claſs of the indigent, vagrants and common beggars, I have hitherto ſaid nothing. About theſe your own obſervation and experience will enable you to judge. Some of them are real and deſerving objects of your compaſſion. Of others, the greateſt want is the want of induſtry and virtue.

The *ſecond* thing propoſed, was, To give exhortations to the practice of this duty. This duty is ſo agreeable to the common notions of mankind, that every one condemns the mean and ſordid ſpirit of that wretch whom God has bleſſed with abundance, and conſequently with the power of bleſſing others, and who is yet relentleſs to the cries of the poor and miſerable. We look with contempt and abhorrence upon a man who is ever amaſſing riches, and never beſtowing them; as greedy as the ſea, and yet as barren as the ſhore. Numbers, it is true, think they have done enough in declaiming againſt the practice of ſuch perſons; for upon the great and the opulent they think the whole burden of this duty ought to reſt; but for themſelves, being ſomewhat of a lower claſs, they deſire to be excuſed. Their circumſtances, they ſay, are but juſt eaſy, to anſwer the de-

mands of their family, and therefore they plead inability, and expect to be exempted from the performance of this duty. Before this excuſe will be of any avail, it behoves them to conſider whether they do not indulge themſelves in expenſes unſuitable to their rank and condition. Imaginary wants are boundleſs, and charity will never begin, if it be poſtponed till theſe have an end. Every man, whether rich or poor, is concerned in this duty, in proportion to his circumſtances: and he that has little is as ſtrictly bound to give ſomething out of that little, as he that hath more is obliged to give more. What advantage was it to the poor widow, that ſhe, by giving her one mite into the treaſury, could exerciſe a nobler charity than all the rich had done! The ſmalleſt gift may be the greateſt bounty.

The practice of this duty, therefore, is incumbent upon all. To the performance of it you are drawn by that pity and compaſſion which are implanted in the heart. Compaſſion is the call of our Father in heaven to us his children, to put us upon relieving our brethren in diſtreſs. This is an affection wiſely interwoven in our frame by the Author of our nature, that whereas abſtracted reaſon is too ſedentary and remiſs a counſellor, we might have a more inſtant and vigorous pleader in our own breaſts to excite us to acts of charity. As far, indeed, as it is ingrafted in us, it is mere inſtinct; but when we cultivate and cheriſh it, till we love mercy; when we dwell upon every tender ſentiment that opens our mind and enlarges our heart, then it becomes a virtue. Whoſoever thou art whoſe heart is hardened and waxed groſs; put thyſelf in the room of ſome poor unfriend-

ed wretch, beſet perhaps with a large family, broken with misfortunes, and pining with poverty, whilſt ſilent grief preys upon his vitals; in ſuch a caſe, what wouldſt thou think it reaſonable thy rich neighbours ſhould do? That, like the Prieſt and the Levite, they ſhould look with an eye of indifference, and paſs by on the other ſide; or like the good Samaritan, pour balm into thy wounded mind? Be thyſelf the judge! and whatever thou thinkeſt reaſonable thy neighbours ſhould do to thee, go thou and do likewiſe unto them.

Conſider next the pleaſure derived from benevolence. Mean and illiberal is the man whoſe ſoul the good of himſelf can entirely engroſs. True benevolence, extenſive as the light of the ſun, takes in all mankind. It is not indeed in your power to ſupport all the indigent, incurable and aged; it is not in your power to train up in the paths of virtue many friendleſs and fatherleſs children: but if, as far as the compaſs of your power reaches, nothing is deprived of the influence of your bounty, and where your power falls ſhort, you are cordially affected to ſee good works done by others, thoſe charities which you could not do, will be placed to your account. To graſp thus the whole ſyſtem of reaſonable beings, with an overflowing love, is to poſſeſs the greateſt of all earthly enjoyments, is to make approaches to the happineſs of higher natures, and anticipate the joy of the world to come. For it is impoſſible, that the man who, actuated by a principle of obedience to his Creator, has cheriſhed each generous and liberal movement of the ſoul, with a head ever ſtudious to contrive, a heart ever willing to pro-

mote, and hands ever ready to diſtribute to the good of his fellow-creatures, ſhould notwithſtanding be doomed to be an aſſociate for ever with accurſed ſpirits, in a place where benevolence never ſhed its kindly beams, but malice and anguiſh, and blackneſs of darkneſs, reign for ever and ever. No, the riches which we have given away will abide with us for ever. The ſame habit of love will accompany us to another world. The bud which hath opened here will blow into full expanſion above, and beautify the paradiſe in the heavens.

SERMON XII.

MATTHEW v. 19.

Whoſoever therefore ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven.

THE Roman Catholics divide ſins into two claſſes, the venial and the mortal. In the firſt claſs, they include thoſe ſlight offences which, as they ſay, are too inconſiderable to offend the Deity, and, in the ſecond, thoſe great and aggravated tranſgreſſions which expoſe men to the Divine vengeance in the world to come. Although this diſtinction, which overthrows the law of morality, is abjured by all Proteſtants, yet ſomething like it is ſtill retained by great numbers of men. What the Papiſts call venial ſins, *they* call ſins of infirmity, human failings, imperfections inſeparable from men. And their own favourite vices, whatever they be, they call by theſe names. Cruel is the condition of the human kind, ſay they, and rigorous the ſpirit of the chriſtian law, if we are to lie under ſuch terrible reſtrictions; if breaking one of the leaſt commandments ſhall exclude us from the kingdom of God. Will the Great Creator be offended by a few trivial tranſgreſſions; with little liberties, which ſerve only for amuſement? If others take a general toleration, ſhall we not have an indulgence at particular times? If we are prohibited from turning back in the paths

of virtue, may we not make a random excurſion? If we are not allowed to taſte the fruits, may we not at leaſt crop the bloſſoms of the forbidden tree? While the waters of pleaſure flow ſo near, and look ſo tempting, ſhall we not be permitted to taſte and live? Will the Great Judge of the world condemn us to eternal puniſhment, for the indulgence of a wandering inclination, for the gratification of a ſudden appetite, for a look, a word, or a thought?

As this is the apology of vice, which, at one time or another, all of you make to yourſelves, I ſhall now ſhow you the dangerous nature and fatal tendency of thoſe offences you call *little ſins*. And in entering upon the ſubject, Chriſtians, I muſt obſerve to you, that the attempt to join together the joys of religion and the pleaſures of ſin, is altogether impracticable. The Divine law regulates the enjoyments as well as the buſineſs of life. You are never to forget one moment that you are chriſtians. The joys which you are allowed to partake of, are in the train of virtue. While you are pilgrims in the wilderneſs, if you return to Egypt again, you forfeit your title to the promiſed land. You have left the dominions of ſin, you have come into another kingdom; and if now you revolt to the foe, you are guilty of treaſon, and may expect to meet with the puniſhment which treaſon deſerves. How ſhall we diſtinguiſh then, you ſay, between the ſins of infirmity, into which the beſt may fall, and the violation of thoſe leaſt commandments which exclude from the kingdom of God? I anſwer, The text makes the diſtinction. Sins of infirmity proceed from frailty and ſurpriſe. The temptation comes

upon men unexpected; the foe meets them unprepared; and, in ſuch caſes, the moſt circumſpect may be off their guard, and the beſt natures may fall. But thoſe ſins which exclude from the kingdom of God, are from deliberation and full conſent of the mind. The perſons who commit them, as the text ſays, "teach men ſo;" that is, they juſtify themſelves in what they do, and ſin upon a plan. Their evil intentions are not occaſional and tranſient, but permanent and governing; they ſleep and wake upon their bad deſigns, and carry them along in their going out and coming in; and thus forming evil habits, make their lives a ſyſtem of iniquity. Whoever does ſo, though it be only in the violation of what he reckons the leaſt commandment, ſhall be called leaſt in the kingdom of heaven; that is, ſhall be excluded altogether from it.

It is propoſed, at this time, to ſet before you the evil nature and dangerous tendency of the leaſt tranſgreſſions. And, in the *firſt* place, it may be obſerved, That it is a ſeries of little actions that marks the characters of men. Human life is not compoſed of great events, but of minute occurrences; and it is not from a man's extraordinary exertions, but from his ordinary conduct, that we form our judgment of his character. When a great event is tranſacting, a man is on his guard, he is prepared to act his part well, and often, on ſuch occaſions, in the hour of exhibition, he appears to the world a different perſon from what he really is. But in the ſeries of little actions, in the detail of ordinary life, the turn of mind diſcovers itſelf, the temper unfolds, the character appears. It is then, when man is himſelf,

the maſk falls off, and the true countenance is diſplayed. Human life, then, being a circle of petty tranſactions, and the temper of men being known from their conduct in little affairs, our character for virtue will depend on our performance of what the world calls the leaſt of the commandments. This is not peculiar to virtue. What is it that conſtitutes the happineſs of domeſtic life? Not the ſingular and uncommon ſituations, but the familiar and the ordinary: not the ſtriking events that fly abroad in the mouths of the people, but the daily round of little things, which are never mentioned. A miſer may have a feaſt, and be a miſer ſtill; he only is a happy man who has his enjoyments every day. With very great talents, and without any remarkable vice, a man may become a moſt diſagreeable member of ſociety, by his neglect of the attentions and civilities, and decorum of life. In like manner, without being guilty of any enormous ſin, by the habitual neglect of inferior duties, and by the practice of little offences, a man may ſin unto death.

A good life is one of thoſe pictures whoſe perfection ariſes from the nice and the minute ſtrokes. It is not one blazing ſtar, but the hoſt of leſſer lights, which forms the beauty of the heavens. In like manner, How does the Great Judge at the laſt day decide the fate, and determine the characters of men? You reckon ſins of omiſſion but little ſins, yet, on account of theſe, the ſentence of everlaſting condemnation is paſſed. Becauſe ye gave no bread to the hungry, no water to the thirſty, and no raiment to the naked, relieved not the oppreſſed, and viſited not the priſoner, therefore "depart into everlaſting

" fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In like manner he determines the character of the righteous, not from the ſtriking and ſplendid virtues which they exhibit to the world, but from the performance of the inferior duties of daily life: " Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the king-" dom prepared for you from the foundation of the " world." Why? Is it for the ſplendid works of piety, for building temples to the Deity, or dying as martyrs to the Chriſtian Faith? No. Men may build temples, without love to the Deity; they may die as martyrs, without real religion; but becauſe ye have given food to the hungry, drink to the thirſty, and raiment to the naked; actions of life in which ye muſt have been ſincere; becauſe ye never expected that ſuch actions would be heard of, and the practice of them grew ſo much into habit, that ye ſcarcely thought it a virtue to perform them.

Secondly, Theſe little ſins attack the authority of the Divine Legiſlator as much, or perhaps more than great ſins. Evil thoughts are as expreſsly prohibited in the Divine law as evil deeds. The ſame God who ſays, Thou ſhalt not kill, ſays alſo, Thou ſhalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. What ſentiment muſt you entertain of the Majeſty in the Heavens, when his command cannot reſtrain you from the commiſſion of the leaſt ſin? Hath not God forbidden the impure deſire and the malicious intention, as well as adultery and murder? And is it not as much his will that he ſhould be obeyed in *thoſe* commandments as in *theſe?* Have you a diſpenſation granted you to take the name of God in vain in common converſation, any more than you have to ſwear

falſely before a civil magiſtrate? Have you more liberty allowed you to wound your neighbour's character than you have to ſhed his blood? No, the prohibition extends to the one as well as to the other. The ſame authority that forbids the action, forbids the deſire. The ſame law which ſays, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, ſays alſo, Thou ſhalt not covet. But you ſay, that the indulgences you plead for, are with regard to things in their own nature indifferent. Alas! if you had proper ideas of a God poſſeſſed of infinite perfection, nothing that he commands or forbids would appear indifferent. To you it may appear a matter of little moment or concern, what the ſtrain of your thoughts is, or how the tenor of your converſation runs; but when you learn that your thoughts are known in heaven, and that by your words you ſhall be juſtified or condemned, theſe aſſume a more ſerious form, and become of infinite importance. But if the things for which you beg an indulgence are in their own nature ſmall, why do you not abſtain from them? If the prophet had commanded you a great thing, you might have murmured againſt the precept; but when he only enjoins what you yourſelves reckon a little thing, what pretence have you for a complaint? In place of being an excuſe, this is an aggravation of your offence. With your own mouth you condemn yourſelf. Can there be a ſtronger proof of a degenerate nature and a ſtubborn mind, than this inclination to diſobey your Creator, in things that you reckon of little conſequence? What can ſhow a heart hardened againſt God, and ſet againſt the Heavens, ſo much as this refractory and rebellious diſpoſition, which leads

men to violate the Majeſty of the law, to inſult the authority of the Lawgiver, to riſk the vengeance of the Omnipotent, and to pour contempt on all the perfections of the Divine nature, rather than part with what they themſelves reckon ſmall and inconſiderable.

In the *third* place, You may contract as much guilt by breaking the leaſt of the commandments, as by breaking the greateſt of them. You ſtart back and are affrighted at the approach of great iniquity; the heart revolts from a temptation to flagrant ſins; yet thouſands of leſſer ſins, evil thoughts, malicious words, petty oaths, commodious lies, little deceits, you make no ſcruple to commit every day. But the guilt of ſuch reiterated ſins is as great, or greater, than that of any ſingle ſin. To hate your neighbour in your heart without cauſe, to take every opportunity of blaſting his character, and defeating his deſigns, makes you as guilty in the Divine eye as if you had imbrued your hands in his blood. To uſe falſe weights, and a deceitful balance, is as criminal as a direct act of theft. He, who defrauds his neighbours daily in the courſe of his buſineſs, is a greater ſinner before God, and a worſe member of ſociety, than he who once in his life robs on the highway. The frequency of theſe little ſins makes the guilt great, and the danger extreme. The conſtant operation of evil deeds impairs the ſtrength of the ſoul, and ſhakes the foundation on which virtue reſts. Wave ſucceeding wave undermines the whole fabric of virtue, and makes the building of God to fall. The thorns, which at firſt could ſcarcely be ſeen, ſpread by degrees over the field, and choke the good ſeed. The locuſts, which Moſes brought over the

land of Egypt, appeared at firſt a contemptible multitude; but in a little time, like a cloud, they darkened the air; as a mighty army; they covered the face of the earth; they devoured the herb of the field, the fruit of the tree, and every green thing, and turned what was formerly like the garden of Eden into a deſolate wilderneſs. Thus theſe little ſins increaſe as they advance; they blaſt where they enter; by degrees they make the ſpiritual life decay; they lay waſte the new creation, and turn the intellectual world into a chaos, without form, and void of order. And yet we are not on our guard againſt them. It fareth with us as it did with the Iſraelites of old. We tremble more at one Goliah than at the whole army of the Philiſtines. One groſs ſcandalous ſin makes us recoil and ſtart back; and yet we venture on the guilt of numberleſs ſmaller ſins, without heſitation or remorſe. What ſignifies it whether you die of many ſmall wounds, or by one great wound? What great difference does it make, whether the devouring fire and the everlaſting burnings are kindled by many ſparks, or by one fire-brand? When God ſhall reckon up againſt you at the great day the many thouſand malicious thoughts, ſlanderous words, deceits, oaths, imprecations, lies, that you have been guilty of, the account will be as dreadful, and the wrath as inſupportable, as if atrocious crimes had ſtood upon the liſt.

In the *fourth* place, Theſe little offences make life a chain and a continuation of ſins, ſo that converſion becomes almoſt impoſſible. Often, upon the commiſſion of a groſs ſin, a ſober interval ſucceeds; ſerious reflection has its hour; ſorrow and contrition of

heart take their turn; then is the criſis of a man's character; and many improving this favourable opportunity, have riſen greater from their fall. But if theſe little ſins then come in; if between the commiſſion of one groſs ſin and another, there intervenes a conſtant neglect of God, a hardneſs of heart, a vanity of imagination, and unfruitfulneſs of life, you ſtill add to the number of your ſins, and treaſure up to yourſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath. Such little ſins fill up all the void ſpaces; ſo that, by this means, life becomes an uninterrupted and unbroken chain of iniquity. Thus you render yourſelves incapable of reformation, and put yourſelves out of the power of Divine grace. How is it poſſible that you can ever come within the reach of mercy? How can the voice of God reach your heart? He ſpeaks to you in the majeſtic ſilence of his works; but you reckon it no ſin at all to ſhut your ears againſt the voice which comes from heaven to earth, and reaches from one end of the world to the other. He ſpeaks to you by the voice of his providence; but you reckon it of little moment to regard the doings of the Lord. He ſpeaks to you in the Holy Scriptures; but you reckon the precept to read theſe one of the leaſt commandments. He ſpeaks to you in the ordinances of his own inſtitution, but alas! how many hold it a little ſin to abſent themſelves from theſe altogether! And how many of thoſe who attend, think it but a little ſin to ſpend their time as unprofitably as if abſent! He ſpeaks to you with the ſtill ſmall voice; his Spirit whiſpers to your ſpirit. He ſeeks to enter in by your thoughts; but vanity, and folly, and vice, ſwarms of little ſins, ſtop up the

paſſage. Thus every corner of life is filled up. Every avenue to the heart is ſhut. You no where lie open to the impreſſion of Divine grace, and the ſoul is ſo full, that there is no room for the Holy Spirit to enter.

In the *laſt* place, Theſe leſſer ſins infallibly lead to greater. There is a fatal progreſs in vice. One ſin naturally leads to another: the firſt ſtep leads to the ſecond, till, by degrees, you come to the bottom of the precipice. Deceit, duplicity, diſſimulation in different matters, which many perſons who maintain what is called a decent character, make no ſcruple to employ, have a tendency to render you inſincere on more important occaſions, and may gradually deſtroy your character of integrity altogether. He, who tells falſehoods for his own conveniency, will in the natural courſe of things, become a common liar.

The ſpirit of gaming perhaps you reckon a ſmall ſin. But whenever gaming is made a ſerious buſineſs, and the love of it becomes a paſſion, farewell to tranquillity and virtue. Then ſucceed days of vanity and nights of care; diſſipation of life, corruption of manners, inattention to domeſtic affairs, arts of deceit, lying, curſing, and perjury. At a diſtance poverty, with contempt at her heels, and in the rear of all, deſpair bringing a halter in her hand.

Thus have I ſet before you the evil nature and the dangerous tendency of the leaſt tranſgreſſions. And do you aſk an indulgence in little ſins, when you ſee how fatal they are? Do you ſtill aſk to make an excurſion from the path of virtue? Such an excurſion if you make you will fall in with the road to

perdition. Do you ſtill wiſh to taſte the waters which unlawful pleaſure preſents to your eye? Taſte them you may; but be aſſured that there is poiſon in the ſtream, and death in the cup. Alas! if we calmly indulge ourſelves in the cool commiſſion of the leaſt ſin, who knows *when* or *where* we ſhall ſtop? If once we yield to the temptation, in whoſe power is it to ſay, Hitherto ſhall I go, but no further? Many perſons at their firſt ſetting out, would have trembled at the very *thought* of theſe ſins, which in time, and by an eaſy tranſition, they have been brought to commit with boldneſs. The traitor conſigned to eternal infamy, Judas Iſcariot, who betrayed the Lord of glory, had at firſt only his covetouſneſs to anſwer for. Fly, therefore, I beſeech you, fly from the firſt approaches of ſin. Guard your innocence, as you would guard your life. If you advance one ſtep over the line which ſeparates the way of life from the way of death, down you ſink to the bottomleſs abyſs. Come not then near the territories of perdition. Stand back and ſurvey the torrent which is now ſo mighty and overflowing, that it deluges the land, and you will find it to proceed from a ſmall contemptible brook. Examine the conflagration that has laid a city in aſhes, and you will find it to ariſe from a ſingle ſpark.

SERMON XIII.

HEBREWS xii. 24.

—The blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things than that of Abel.

REASON and philoſophy have applied their powers to external objects with wonderful ſucceſs. They have traced the order of nature, and explained the elements of things. By obſervation and experience, they have aſcertained the laws of the univerſe; they have counted the number of the ſtars; and following the footſteps of the Almighty, have diſcovered ſome of the great lines of that original plan according to which he created the world. But when they approach the region of ſpirit and intelligence, they ſtop ſhort in their diſcoveries. The mind eludes its own ſearch. The Author of our nature has checked our career in ſuch ſtudies, to teach us that action and moral improvement, not ſpeculation and inquiry, are the ends of our being. Accordingly, the moral part of our frame is the eaſieſt underſtood. Having been placed here by Providence for great and noble purpoſes, virtue is the law of our nature. This being the great rule in the moral world, God has enforced it in various ways. He hath endowed us with a ſenſe or faculty which, viewing actions in themſelves, without regard to their conſequences, approves or diſapproves them. He

hath endowed us with another ſenſe, which paſſes ſentence upon actions according to their conſequences in ſociety. He hath given us a third, which, removing human actions from life, and the world altogether, carries them to a higher tribunal. The firſt, which is the *moral ſenſe*, belongs to us as individuals; is inſtinctive in all its operations; approves of virtue as being moral beauty; and diſapproves of vice as being moral deformity. The ſecond, which is the ſenſe of *utility*, belongs to us as members of ſociety, is directed in its operations by reaſon, and paſſes ſentence upon actions according as they are favourable or pernicious to the public good. The third, which is *conſcience*, belongs to us as ſubjects of the Divine government, is directed in its operations by the word of God, and conſiders human actions as connected with a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. It is this which properly belongs to religion. Upon this faculty of conſcience, the happineſs or miſery of mankind in a great meaſure depends. A good conſcience is a continual feaſt, and proves a ſpring of joy amidſt the greateſt diſtreſſes. A conſcience troubled with remorſe or haunted with fear, is the greateſt of all human evils. Accordingly, the Chriſtian religion, which adapts itſelf to every ſtate of our nature, and carries conſolation to the mind in every diſtreſs, has preſented to the weary and heavy laden ſinner, "the blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better "things than the blood of Abel." The meaning of which expreſſion is this: as the blood of Abel, crying to Heaven for vengeance, filled the mind of Cain with horror, and as every ſin is attended with remorſe; ſo the blood of Jeſus is of power to deliver

the mind from this remorſe, and reſtore peace of conſcience to the true penitent.

In further treating upon this ſubject, I ſhall deſcribe to you the nature of that remorſe which is the companion of a guilty mind; and next the deliverance which the goſpel gives us from it, by means of "the blood of ſprinkling." In the *firſt* place, then, Let us conſider the nature of that remorſe which is the companion of a guilty mind.

Almighty God having created man after his own image, intended him for moral excellence and perfection. Hence all his paſſions were originally ſet on the ſide of virtue, and all his faculties tended to heaven. Conſcience is ſtill the leaſt corrupted of all the powers of the ſoul. It keeps a faithful regiſter of our deeds, and paſſes impartial ſentence upon them. It is appointed the judge of human life; is inveſted with authority and dominion over the whole man, and is armed with ſtings to puniſh the guilty. Theſe are the ſanctions and enforcements of that eternal law to which we are ſubjected. For even in our preſent fallen ſtate, we are ſo framed by the Author of our nature, that moral evil can no more be committed than natural evil can be ſuffered, without anguiſh and diſquiet. As pain follows the infliction of a wound, as certainly doth remorſe attend the commiſſion of ſin. Conſcience may be lulled aſleep for a while, but it will one day vindicate its rights. It will ſeize the ſinner in an hour when he is not aware; will blaſt him perhaps in the midſt of his mirth, and put him to the torture of an accuſing mind. For the truth of this obſervation, let me appeal to your own experience. Did you ever indulge a criminal paſſion, did

you ever allow yourſelves in any practice which you knew to be unlawful, without feeling an inward ſtruggle and ſtrong reluctance of mind before the attempt, and bitter pangs of remorſe after the commiſſion? Though no eye ſaw what you did; though you were ſure that no mortal could diſcover it, did not ſhame and confuſion ſecretly lay hold of you? Was not your own conſcience inſtead of a thouſand witneſſes? Did it not plead with you face to face, and upbraid you for your tranſgreſſions? Have not ſome of you perhaps, at this inſtant, a ſenſible experience of the truths which I am now preſſing upon you? In theſe days of retirement and ſelf-examination, did you not feel the operation of that powerful principle? Did not your ſins then riſe up before you in ſad remembrance? Has not the image of them purſued you into the houſe of God? And are not your minds now ſtung with ſome of that regret which followed upon the firſt commiſſion?

My brethren, there is no eſcaping from a guilty mind. You can avoid ſome evils, by mingling in ſociety; you can avoid others, by retiring into ſolitude; but this enemy, this tormentor within, is never to be avoided. If thou retireſt into ſolitude, it will meet thee there, and haunt thee like a ghoſt. If thou goeſt into ſociety, it will go with thee; it will mar the entertainment, and daſh the untaſted cup from thy trembling hand. Whilſt the ſinner indulges his vain imagination; whilſt he ſolaces himſelf with the proſpect of pleaſures riſing upon pleaſures never to have an end, and ſays to his ſoul, Be of good cheer, thou haſt happineſs laid up for many years, a voice comes to his heart that ſtrikes him with ſudden fear, and

turns the viſion of joy to a ſcene of horror. Whilſt the proud and impious Balſhazzar enjoys the feaſt with his princes, his concubines, and his wives; whilſt he carouſes in the conſecrated veſſels of the ſanctuary; in a moment the ſcene changes; the hand-writing on the wall turns the houſe of mirth into a houſe of mourning; the countenance of the king changes, and his knees ſmite one againſt another, whilſt the Prophet, in awful accents, pronounces his doom; pronounces that his hour is come, and that his kingdom is departed from him.

It is in adverſity that the pangs of conſcience are moſt ſeverely felt. When affliction humbles the native pride of the heart, and gives a man leiſure to reflect upon his former ways, his paſt life riſes up to view; having now no intereſt in the ſins which he committed, they appear in all their native deformity, and fill his mind with anguiſh and remorſe. Men date their misfortunes from their faults, and acknowledge their ſin when they meet with the puniſhment. The ſons of Jacob felt no remorſe when they ſold their brother to be a ſlave; they had delivered themſelves from the fooliſh fear that he was one day to be greater than they; they congratulated themſelves upon the mighty deliverance. But the very firſt misfortune which befel them, a little rough uſage in a foreign land, awakened their guilty fears, and they ſaid one to another, "We are verily guilty "concerning our brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh "of his ſoul when he beſought us, and we would not "hear, *therefore* is this diſtreſs come upon us."

But that the proſperous ſinner may not preſume upon impunity from the laſhes of a guilty mind, and

to ſhow you that no ſituation, however exempted from adverſity, and that no ſtation, however exalted, is proof againſt the horrors of remorſe, I ſhall adduce two remarkable inſtances of perſons who felt all the horrors of a guilty mind, without meeting with any judgments to awaken them. The firſt is that of Cain, referred to in the text. When the offering of Abel aſcended acceptable and well-pleaſing to God, Cain was ſeized with envy; from that moment he meditated vengeance againſt him, and at laſt imbrued his hands in the blood of his brother. There was then no law againſt murder; and if antecedent to law there is no original ſenſe of right and wrong implanted in the mind; if conſcience, as ſome affirm, was not a natural but an acquired power, the mind of Cain might have been at eaſe; he might have enjoyed the calm and the ſerenity of innocence. But when he was brought to the tribunal of conſcience, was his mind at eaſe? Did he enjoy the calm and the ſerenity of innocence? No. He cried out in the bitterneſs of remorſe, "My puniſhment is greater "than I can bear." What puniſhment did he complain of? There was then no puniſhment denounced againſt murder, and the Lord expreſsly ſecured him from corporal puniſhment. But he had that within, to which all external puniſhments are light. He was extended on the rack of reflection, and he lay upon the torture of the mind. Hell was kindled within him, and he felt the firſt gnawings of the worm that never dies.

Another remarkable inſtance of the dominion of conſcience, we have in the hiſtory of Herod. John the Baptiſt, the harbinger of our Lord, ſojourned a

while in the court of Herod. This faithful monitor ſpared not ſin in the perſon of a king, but reproved him openly for his vices. Herod, although he diſliked, yet he reſpected the Prophet, and feared the multitude, who believed in his doctrines. But on Herod's birth-day, when the daughter of Herodias danced before him, he made a ſudden vow, that he would grant her whatever ſhe deſired. Being inſtructed of her mother, ſhe aſked the head of John the Baptiſt. One of the common arts by which we deceive our conſciences is to ſet one duty againſt another. Hence ſin is generally committed under the appearance of ſome virtue, and hence the greateſt crimes which have ever troubled the world, have been committed under the name, and under the ſhow of religion. Such was the crime which we are now conſidering. The obſervance of an oath has, among all nations, been regarded as a religious act; and here a fair opportunity offered itſelf to one who only waited for ſuch an opportunity, to make religion triumph at the expence of virtue. If Herod had no inclination to deſtroy the Prophet, and no intereſt in his death, his conſcience would have told him that murder was an atrocious crime, which no conſideration could alleviate, nor excuſe; it would have told him that vows, which it is unlawful to make, it is alſo unlawful to keep; but Herod was already a party in the cauſe; he determined to get rid of his enemy; he ſatisfied his conſcience with ſome vain pretences, and gave orders to behead the Baptiſt. But were all his anxieties and ſorrows buried with the Prophet? No: the grave of the Prophet was the grave of his peace. Neither the ſplendour of Majeſty, nor the guards of

ſtate, nor the noiſe of battle, nor the ſhouts of victory, could drown the alarms of conſcience. That mangled form was ever preſent to his eyes; the cry of blood was ever in his ears. Hence, when our Saviour appeared in a public character, and began to teach and to work miracles, Herod cried out, in the horrors of a guilty mind, "It is John the Baptiſt "whom I ſlew; he is riſen from the dead."

How great, my brethren, is the power and dominion of conſcience! The Almighty appointed it his vicegerent in the world; he inveſted it with his own authority, and ſaid, "Be thou a God unto man." Hence it has power over the courſe of time. It can recall the paſt; it can anticipate the future. It reaches beyond the limits of this globe; it viſits the chambers of the grave; it reanimates the bodies of the dead; exerts a dominion over the inviſible regions, and ſummons the inhabitants of the eternal world to haunt the ſlumbers, and ſhake the hearts, of the wicked. Tremble then, O man! whoſoever thou art, who art conſcious to thyſelf of unrepented ſins. Peace of mind thou ſhalt never enjoy. Repoſe, like a falſe friend, ſhall fly from thee. Thou ſhalt be driven from the preſence of the Lord like Adam when he ſinned, and be terrified when thou heareſt his voice, as awful when it comes from within, as when it came from without. The ſpirit of a man may ſuſtain his infirmity; but a ſpirit wounded by remorſe who can bear?

The *ſecond* thing propoſed, was, to ſhow you the deliverance which the Goſpel gives us from remorſe, by means of the "blood of ſprinkling." This expreſſion alludes to the ceremonial method of expia

ting ſin under the Old Teſtament, by offering ſacrifices, and ſprinkling the blood of the victim upon the altar. But as this was in itſelf only typical of Chriſt, How welcome to the ſoul is the glad tidings of the Meſſiah, who did, what theſe ſacrifices could not do,—actually ſave his people from their ſins! By the atonement and blood of Chriſt, the ſins of men have been completely expiated. It is the voice of the Goſpel of Peace, "Take, eat, and live forever." What relief will it give to the wounded mind, to hear of the blood of ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things than the blood of Abel! The Goſpel being publiſhed to the world, and the offers of mercy through a Redeemer being made to all men, the ſincere penitent accepts theſe offers, and flies for refuge to the hope ſet before him. Then Jeſus ſaves his people from their ſins, he heals the mind which was wounded by remorſe, and beſtows that peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. There is joy in heaven, we are told, over a ſinner that repenteth, and the joy of the heavens is communicated to the returning penitent. When he beholds God reconciled to him in the face of his Son; when he hears, in ſecret, the bleſſed Jeſus whiſpering in ſweet ſtrains to his heart, "Son, be of good cheer, "thy ſins are forgiven thee," he is filled with peace and with joy; with peace which paſſeth all underſtanding; with joy which is unſpeakable and glorious. His ſins being forgiven, he is accepted in the Beloved. He is an heir of immortality, and his name is written in heaven; to him is opened the fountain of life. He has a title to all the pleaſures which are at God's right hand; to the treaſures of heaven, and

to the joys of eternity. He looks forward with a well-grounded hope, to that happy day, when he ſhall take poſſeſſion of the inheritance on high; he anticipates the delights of the world to come; and breaks forth into ſtrains of exultation, ſimilar to thoſe tranſports of aſſurance uttered by the Apoſtle, "Who "ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? "It is God that juſtifieth; who is he that condemn- "eth? It is Chriſt that died, yea, rather, that is riſ- "en again, and who now ſitteth and intercedeth for "us at God's right hand."

SERMON XIV.

MARK viii. 36.

For what ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?

THERE is not a perſon in this aſſembly, but who aſſents immediately to the truth of the maxim implied in the text. You all agree, that religion is the one thing needful, and that above all things you ought to ſeek the kingdom of God, and the righteouſneſs thereof. But there is a wide difference between the aſſent of the mind to the truth of this principle, and that deep conviction of its importance, which, in Scripture, obtains the name of faith; ſufficient to influence the heart, and to determine the life. A great part of mankind ſeem to have no ſteady belief that they are endowed with ſouls which are immortal; an eternity to come is with them merely a matter of ſpeculation, and their faith in a future world has little more influence upon their lives, than their idea of a diſtant country, which they are never to ſee. Hence ſpiritual and eternal things are heard with little emotion or concern, while they are delivered in the houſe of God. Some can give themſelves up to liſtleſneſs; and others ſoon loſe all remembrance of what they have heard, in the next amuſement, or in the news of the day. Even he who ſpoke as never man ſpake, and while he diſcourſed

on points of ſuch importance as the loſs of the ſoul, had occaſion often to take up the complaint, that in vain he ſtretched out his hands all day long to a diſobedient people.

To call your contemplation, then, to theſe ſubjects, for they need no more but to be conſidered aright, in order to be felt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you the value of the ſoul, from its native dignity, from its capacity of improvement, from its immortality, and from its unalterable ſtate at death.

Let us conſider then, in the *firſt* place: The native importance and dignity of the human ſoul. It is the mind chiefly that is the man. Our ſouls properly are ourſelves. The bodily organs are the miniſters of the mind; by theſe it ſees and hears, and holds a correſpondence with external things. It is by our ſouls that we hold our ſtation in the ſcale of being; that we rank above the animal world, and claim alliance with ſuperior and immortal natures. As the ſoul is ſuperior to the body, ſo intellectual pleaſures exceed the ſenſual; as heaven is higher than the earth, ſo the joys of a heavenly origin are ſuperior to earthly enjoyments. I mean not in the common way, to depreciate temporal poſſeſſions, as being inſignificant in themſelves, and unworthy the cares or labours of a wiſe man. Such diſcourſe is mere declamation; it is againſt nature, contrary to truth, and makes no impreſſion at all. Let all the value be ſet upon wealth and temporal poſſeſſions which they deſerve, as affording a defence from many evils to which poverty is liable; as miniſtering to the convenience, the conſolation, and the enjoyment of life; as ſupporting a ſtation with decency and dignity in

the world, and as accompanied with an importance, by which a good man may find much pleaſure ariſing to himſelf, and have the power of doing much good to his fellow-creatures; let all the value which reaſon allows, be ſet upon temporal acquiſitions and enjoyments, ſtill they are inferior to thoſe of an intellectual and moral kind; ſtill the maxim remains true, That he would be an infinite loſer who ſhould gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul. "Thou haſt put more gladneſs into my heart," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, "than "worldly men know, when their corn, and their wine, "and their oil abound." And do not your own feeling and experience bear witneſs to this truth? Who will not acknowledge that there is more excellence in wiſdom, than in mere animal ſtrength? Who will not own that there is more happineſs in the improving converſation of the wiſe, than in the tumultuous uproar of the debauched and licentious? Are the rays of light as pleaſant to the eye as the radiations of truth to the mind? Have ſenſual gratifications a charm for the ſoul, equal to intellectual and moral joys? While the former ſoon pall upon the appetite, are not the latter a perpetual feaſt? While the remembrance of the one is attended with no pleaſure, is not the remembrance of the other a repetition of the enjoyment?

But great as the dignity of the human ſoul is, it may be ſtill greater; for, in the *ſecond* place, It poſſeſſes a capacity of improvement. This conſtitutes one eſſential difference between the intellectual and the material world. All material things ſoon reach the end of their progreſs, and arrive at a point beyond which they cannot go. Inſtinct grows apace,

and the animal is ſoon complete in all its faculties and powers. Man ripens more ſlowly, becauſe he ripens for immortality. Thoſe enjoyments and purſuits of man alſo, which do not belong to him as an immortal being, come ſoon to their period. Amuſement, when continued long, becomes a fatigue. In pleaſure there is a point, beyond which, if it be carried, it is pleaſure no more, it turns into pain. The purſuits of greatneſs too, are very limited, and the race of honor is ſoon run. After many a weary ſtep, the votary of ambition finds that he has been running in a circle, and that he is come to the ſelf-ſame point from which he ſet out. Mind, mind alone, contains in itſelf the principle of progreſſion and improvement without end. There is no ultimate power in the progreſs of man: there is no termination to the career of an immortal ſpirit. The dominions of earthly greatneſs are circumſcribed within narrow limits, and the hero has often wiſhed for new countries to conquer: but the empire of the mind has no limit nor boundary; and we can never arrive at that period, where we may ſay, Hitherto can we go, but no further. Never have we learned ſo much, but we may learn more. Suppoſe life never ſo long, if the powers remain, new paths to ſcience may be ſtruck out, freſh acceſſions of knowledge may be made. And we know from experience, that the largeſt meaſure of knowledge proves no burden to the mind, nor weakens its powers; but that, on the contrary, the capacity enlarges with the acquiſition, and that men, the more they have learned, the more apt they are to learn; the leſs is their labour, and the eaſier their progreſs.

Improvements in goodneſs keep pace with improvements in wiſdom. Repeated acts of obedience grow into habit; the penitent is confirmed in righteouſneſs, and he that is holy becomes holier ſtill. From the fulneſs which is in God, he adds grace to grace. The day of ſmall things ſhineth more and more; and that day is ſucceeded by no night. The pilgrims, who at firſt ſet out feeble and faint, grow vigorous as they advance, going forward from ſtrength to ſtrength; aſcending from one degree of goodneſs to another, they approach the everlaſting hills, and, coming within the ſphere of heaven, they inhale the ſpirit of their native region, they feel the attractions of the uncreated beauty, they receive a foretaſte of the fruits of life, and, with hearts already full of heaven, and with tongues already tuned to the ſongs above, they put on the brightneſs of angels, and enter into the manſions of paradiſe.

In the *third* place, The value of the ſoul will further appear, if we conſider that it is immortal. All human things ſoon come to an end. Temporal poſſeſſions and earthly greatneſs have a ſhort date. The world itſelf is for ever changing; the faſhion thereof paſſes away, and he who knows it in one age, in the next would not know it again. How ſhort lived are the enjoyments of this mortal ſtate! Although the flowers of tranſient joy, more hardy than the gourd of Jonah, may outlive the heat of the morning, and glow amid the blaze of noon, yet when the blaſt of evening comes, they are nipt and wither away. Ambition too has its day, and often a ſhort one. Its votaries ſeem to be raiſed, but the more ſenſibly to feel their fall. The ſame whirlwind that ſnatches

them up from the crowd, brings them down at even with tenfold fury. Not to mention theſe more violent revolutions, its natural period ſoon comes. He who runs the race of human glory, is loſt in the very duſt that is raiſed around him. And ſuch is the ſudden end of all terreſtrial enjoyments, when, after the ſtudy and the labour of years, we have with much pains and care gathered together the requiſites and materials of a happy life, and ſay to ourſelves, "Soul, "take thine eaſe, thou haſt goods laid up for many "years," the warning voice is heard, "Thou fool, "this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee." So tranſient is the date, ſo ſhort the day of power, and pleaſure, and greatneſs! But wiſdom never dies; but virtue is immortal. We have a higher life than that which beats in the pulſe, and when the duſt returns to the duſt as it was, the ſpirit returns to God who gave it. It is indeed an awful, though a pleaſing thought that we have an eternity before us. When the ſun ſhall be extinguiſhed in eternal darkneſs, when the heavens ſhall be rolled together like a ſcroll, when the earth with all its works ſhall be diſſolved, the ſoul ſhall ſurvive the general wreck, and exult in the enjoyment of youth immortal! To think of an infinity of years of exiſtence enduring beyond all the numbers which we can add together, beyond all the millions of ages which figures can comprehend, and that, when all this vaſt ſum of duration is expended, our exiſtence is but juſt beginning, is, indeed, beyond imagination to graſp. Never to come to an end, never to be nearer an end, is indeed amazing, overwhelming, and incomprehenſible to the mind. But ſuch is thine inheritance, O man!

" Becauſe I live," ſaith the Lord, " ye ſhall live al-
" ſo." Our duration ſhall be coeval with His years who ſits upon the throne for ever; the Ancient of days, who is, and was, and is to come.

In the *laſt* place, To ſhow you the value of the ſoul ſtill more, after death its ſtate is unalterable. This is our ſtate of probation, and now is the time to fix the character for eternity. This is the ſpring-time of everlaſting life; according as we now ſow, hereafter we ſhall reap; on our preſent conduct, depends our happineſs or miſery for ever. There is neither repentance nor apoſtaſy beyond the grave. The righteous can never fall away, and to the wicked there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin. From the judgment-ſeat of the Immutable, the voice is heard, " He that is righteous, let him be righteous ſtill; " and he that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill."

But even here, too, appears that goodneſs of God which is over all his works. For while we know not of any addition to the torments of the wicked, the happineſs of the righteous ſhall be for ever on the increaſe. That capacity of improvement which we formerly aſcribed to the ſoul, is a capacity of improvement without end. The progreſs which begins here, is carried on hereafter. Heaven is indeed the reſidence of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; but it is not to be imagined, that they are all at once advanced to a perfection which they ſhall not to eternity exceed. They will indeed find their ſtate happy, when they are taken from this world; they will all be preſented without ſpot or blemiſh in the preſence of God, with exceeding joy; but ſtill there is room left for their improvement in perfection and happi-

neſs. It cannot indeed, be otherwiſe. For the more we know of the Divine perfections and works, our veneration and love of God will increaſe the more. Now, it is impoſſible that we can ever know ſo much of God and his works, but that we may know more. As our knowledge of God, therefore, and our views of the Divine glory will be enlarged without end, our love and admiration of him will alſo increaſe for ever. And in proportion to our love, our aſſimilation to the Divine nature, and our joy in the Lord, will be. What a proſpect, O chriſtian, does this open up to thy mind! Here thou art at liberty to expatiate at large! Here is a noble field for thy contemplation! There is a time appointed when thou ſhalt occupy that ſtation which is now occupied by the higheſt angel in heaven. Not that we ſhall overtake the angels in their courſe, or, in the career of immortality, preſs upon natures of a ſuperior order; but that we ſhall make advances in moral perfections, and improve in the beauties of immortality. God ſhall behold his great family for ever brightening in holineſs; for ever drawing nearer and nearer in likeneſs to himſelf. The river of their pleaſures increaſes as it rolls. The fulneſs of their joy grows more and more full. Throughout all the ages of eternity, there is ſtill a heaven which is to come; ſtill a glory which is to be revealed.

If the ſoul then be of ſuch infinite value, how inexpreſſibly great muſt the *loſs* of it be! Over the manſions of utter darkneſs, the Scriptures draw a veil which does not authoriſe our conjectures. What is comprehended under theſe awful emblems, the worm that never dies, the fire that is not quench-

ed, everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, we do not know. May the Almighty forbid, that any of us ſhould ever know! But of this, the Scriptures aſſure us, that from theſe manſions there is no return; that the gates of the eternal world ſhut to open no more, and that when the ſoul is once loſt, it is loſt for ever and for ever!

SERMON XV.

PSALM xliii. 4.

I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

CHRISTIANS, as we are next Lord's day to go to the altar, and approach unto God, it may be proper for me now to explain the nature, and ſet before you the advantages, of ſuch an approach.

The pleaſures of devotion have been the theme of good men in all ages; and they are pleaſures of ſuch a kind as good men only can feel. In what I am now to ſay therefore, I muſt appeal to the heart, to the hearts of thoſe who, in times paſt, have felt the joy of ſpiritual communion, and who will again feel that it is good ſtill for them to draw nigh unto God.

This is the time when Jeſus prepares a banquet for his friends; when the Spirit ſaith, Come; when the Church ſaith, Come; when he that is athirſt is invited to come; and happy will it be when the friends of Jeſus prepare to meet with their Lord, if thoſe who have hitherto been ſtrangers to the holy hill, ſhall be attracted with the beauty which is in true holineſs, alſo to come and to take the waters of life freely. For thus runs the gracious promiſe of Heaven: "The ſtrangers who join themſelves to the "Lord, to love him and to ſerve him, even them "will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them

"joyful in my houſe of prayer." In further treating on this ſubject, what I intend at preſent, is, in the *firſt* place, To explain the nature of that approach which the devout make to God; and, in the *ſecond* place, Set before you the advantages which accompany ſuch an approach.

I am, in the *firſt* place, then, To explain the nature of that approach which the devout make to God.

This earth is not the native region of that ſpirit which is in man. It finds not objects here congenial with its nature, nor a ſphere adequate to its faculties. It wants room to expand to its full dimenſions; to ſpread ſo wide, and ſtretch ſo far, and ſoar ſo high, as its immortal nature and unbounded capacity will admit. Deſcended from heaven, it aſpires to heaven again. Created immortal, nothing that is mortal can ſatisfy its deſires. Made after the image of God, it tends to that God whoſe lineaments it ſtill bears. When we approach to God, therefore, we find objects ſuited to our nature, and engage in the employment for which the ſoul was made. Here we are at home in our Father's houſe. Here our ſpirits aſpire to hold communion with the everlaſting Spirit; and we tend to heaven with exceeding joy, as to our native country.

The ſenſe of Deity is akin to the perception of beauty and the ſenſibility of taſte. We are formed by the Author of our nature to feel certain movements of mind at the ſight of certain objects. Even inanimate things are not without their attractions. The flowers of the field have their beauty. Animal life riſes in our regard. Rational excellence and moral perfection rank ſtill higher in our eſteem, and when expreſſed in action, and appearing in life,

awake emotions of the nobleſt kind, and beget a pleaſure which is ſupreme. Let any perſon of a right conſtituted mind place before his view a character of high eminence for generoſity, fidelity, fortitude; let him ſee theſe virtues tried to the utmoſt, exerted in painful ſtruggles, overcoming difficulties, and conquering in a glorious cauſe, and he will feel their effects in his admiring mind; he will be actuated with reſpect and love to ſuch illuſtrious virtues. We account that faculty of the mind which gives us a reliſh for theſe pleaſures, a perfection in our nature, and a high one; we look upon an inſenſibility to ſuch enjoyments as a radical defect. Let us apply this principle to religion. Who can behold the vaſtneſs and magnificence of the works of God without emotion; and infinite perfection without wonder and awe? Can our thoughts be fixed upon infinite goodneſs and everlaſting love, without affection and without gratitude? Can we behold Divinity in a form of fleſh; the Son of God extended on the croſs for the ſalvation of the world, and our hearts not burn within us with love to him who loved us unto the death? Can we behold the veil drawn aſide from the inviſible world, the heavens opened over our head, and the treaſures of eternity diſplayed to view, and after all continue cold and dead; cold to the beauty of the heavens, dead to the love of immortality? Where there is any ſenſibility at all, where there are any affections that become humanity, they will be excited to their moſt lively exerciſe by the preſence of ſpiritual and divine things.

Under the influence of theſe objects, and the impreſſion of Deity, the devout enter into their cham-

ber and ſhut the door; they turn aſide their eyes from beholding vanity; they charge their paſſions to be ſilent, their minds to be ſtill; and pour out their hearts to Him who made them, in all the fervency of prayer. Thus prepared to ſeek the Lord God of their fathers, they come to his temple to meet with him there. They are ſeized with a religious awe in the preſence of the ſanctuary, and approach to the altar wondering and adoring, as Moſes to the burning buſh, and as the High Prieſt of old to the holy of holies. They look beyond the externals of a ſacrament, and, under the ſymbols in the communion, they diſcern the myſteries of redeeming love. Notwithſtanding the veil with which a greater than Moſes covers himſelf on this holy mountain, they behold his beauty, and cannot bear the brightneſs of his countenance. When they ſit down with him at his table, they are ſenſible of his preſence: while their hands receive the ſacred ſymbols, their eyes behold the Lord of Glory. In the ſpirit of devotion, and on the wings of faith, they riſe from earth to heaven; they pierce beyond the clouds, and enter within the veil. The everlaſting doors are thrown open; the King of Glory appears upon his throne; Angels and Archangels cover themſelves with their wings, and all the pillars of the firmament tremble.

But not to heaven is the Divinity confined. He fills the earth; he dwells with men. Look around you, and behold the marks of his preſence, and the impreſſion of his hand. In the gay and lovely ſcenes of nature, behold him in his beauty ſmiling on his works. In the grand and awful objects of creation, in the tempeſt, in the thunder, in the earthquake, be-

hold him in the Majeſty of Omnipotence. When, like the prophet who retired to the wilderneſs, you hear that voice which rends aſunder the mountains, which breaks in pieces the rocks, and which ſhakes the pillars of the world, you hear behind it a ſtill ſmall voice, ſaying, "It is I, be not afraid."

Thus, good men ſee the Creator in his works; they have the Lord always before them. They know, where they can find him, and can come nigh to his ſeat. They go forward, and he is there, backward, and they perceive his footſteps; on the right hand his wonders are ſeen; on the left his goodneſs is felt. They cannot go but where he is. The Great Univerſe is the temple of the Deity, built by his hand, conſecrated by his preſence, bright with his glory.

The *ſecond* thing propoſed, was, To ſet before you the advantages which accompany this ſolemn approach to God, which are the following: there is honor in approaching to God, there is joy in approaching to God, there is conſolation in approaching to God, there is preparation for heaven in approaching to God.

Firſt, then, There is honor in approaching to God. The ſuperiority of man to the animal world has been inferred from the ſtructure and formation of his body. While the inferior animals, prone and grovelling, bend downwards to that earth which is their only element, man is formed with an erect figure, and with a countenance that looks to the heavens. His erect figure is given as the indication of an elevated mind, and the countenance that looks to the heavens is beſtowed, in order to prepare us for the contemplation of what is great and glorious. With

this formation of body, and with this tendency of mind, man feels that the earth is not his native region; he looks abroad over the whole extent of nature; he has an eye that glances from earth to heaven, and a mind, which, unconfined by ſpace or time, ſeizes on eternity. The eye that glances from earth to heaven, the mind which ſeizes on eternity, draw the line between the intellectual and animal world. The beaſt of the field, indeed, beholds the face of the heavens; the bird of the air is cheered with the ſplendour of the ſun; but man alone has the intellectual eye, which beholds in the heavens the handiwork of Omnipotence, and which traces in the ſun the glory of its Creator. To him, high-favoured of his Maker, a ſcene opens, unſeen by the eye of ſenſe; a new heaven and a new earth preſent themſelves; the intellectual world diſcloſes its riſing wonders, and ſeen by his own light, in the majeſty of moral perfection, God appears. It was reſerved to be the glory of man, that he alone, of all the inhabitants of this lower world, ſhould be admitted into the preſence of his Creator, and hold intercourſe with the Author of his being.

Accordingly, in the happy days of the human race, when the age of innocence laſted, and the Garden of Eden bloomed, there was an intercourſe between heaven and earth, and God did dwell with man. Our firſt parents in Paradiſe were ſenſible of his preſence; they heard his voice among the trees of the garden; they held converſe with him face to face, and found that the chief honor of their nature conſiſted in drawing nigh to God. Nay, it is the happineſs of higher natures, it is the glory of ſuperior

beings, of the principalities and powers in heaven, to dwell in the preſence of their King, to worſhip at the throne of infinite perfection, and draw nearer and nearer to the fountain of all felicity. But this honor have all the ſaints. To thee, O Chriſtian! it is given to hold communion with the Creator, and to become the friend of the Almighty. Truly your fellowſhip is with the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt. If it be great and honorable to be near the perſon and round the throne of an earthly king, how truly glorious are they whom the King of heaven delighteth to honor! No wonder then, that though exalted to the higheſt dignity which the world can beſtow, the king of Iſrael was ambitious of higher ſtill: "One "thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I ſeek "after, that I may dwell in the houſe of the Lord all "the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the "Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

Secondly, There is joy in approaching to God. "I "will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding "joy." The idea of a perfect being is the moſt joyful ſubject of contemplation that can be preſented to man. Moral qualities, even when they ſhine in a leſſer degree, have a charm for the ſoul. The proſpect of natural beauty is not more pleaſant to the eye, than the contemplation of moral beauty to the mind. A great and good action, a ſtriking inſtance of benevolence, of public ſpirit, of magnanimity, intereſts us ſtrongly in behalf of the performer, and makes the heart glow with gratitude to him, although he be unknown. We take delight in placing before our eyes the illuſtrious characters that ſtand forth in hiſtory, wiſe legiſlators, unſhaken patriots, public bene-

factors of mankind, or models of goodneſs in private life, whoſe virtues ſhone to the paſt, and ſhine to preſent times, whoſe lives were glorious to themſelves, and beneficial to the world. If an imperfect copy gives ſo much ſatisfaction, how will we be affected at the contemplation of the great Original? If a few faint traces and lineaments of goodneſs, ſcattered up and down, yield us ſo much pleaſure, the pleaſure will be ſupreme, when we contemplate His nature in whom every excellence, every moral perfection, all Divine attributes, reſide as in their native ſeat, flow as from their eternal ſource, and ever operate as vital and immortal principles. For all created beauty is but a ſhadow of that beauty which is uncreated; all human excellence but an emanation of that excellence which is Divine; all finite perfection but a faint copy of perfections which are infinite; and all the traces of goodneſs to be found among men or angels, but a few faint rays from the Father of lights, the uncreated, unclouded and unſetting Sun of nature, who at firſt gave life to the univerſe, who kindled the vital flame which is ſtill glowing, who ſupplies all the orbs of heaven with undiminiſhed luſtre, and whoſe ſingle ſmile ſpreads joy over the moral world.

Thus, the very idea of a perfect Being is a ſource of high pleaſure to the mind; but to us there is more implied in the idea of the Deity. For theſe perfections are not dormant in the Divine nature, they are perpetually employed for the happineſs of man. This glorious Being is our Father and our Friend. He called us into being at firſt, to make us happy; he hath given us many proofs of his goodneſs, and he hath allowed us to hope for more. He

is ſoon to give us an opportunity of commemorating the moſt ſignal diſplay of his grace, his nobleſt gift to the children of men. And, if he ſpared not his own Son, but freely gave him up (to the death) for us all, may it not be depended upon, that with him he will give us all things? Entering into theſe ideas, and animated with this ſpirit, the pious man is never ſo much in his element, as when he is drawing nigh to God. The mind never makes nobler exertions, is never ſo conſcious of its native grandeur and ancient dignity, as when holding high converſe with its Creator: the heart never feels ſuch unſpeakable peace, as when it is fixed upon him who made it, as when its affections go out on the ſupreme beauty, as when it reſts upon the Rock of ages, and is held within the circle of the everlaſting arms.

Hence, the good men of old, in approaching to God, broke forth into the language of rapture, "As "the hart panteth after the water-brook, ſo panteth "my ſoul after thee, O Lord. O God, thou art my "[illegible] early will I ſeek thee. My ſoul thirſteth for "thee. My fleſh longeth for thee in a dry and parch-"ed land, wherein no water is; that I may ſee thy "glory as I have ſeen it in the ſanctuary. Becauſe "thy loving-kindneſs is better than life, my mouth "ſhall praiſe thee with joyful lips. Surely we "ſhall be ſatisfied with the goodneſs of thy houſe, "and thou wilt give us to drink the river of thy "pleaſures.—Whom have we in the heavens but "thee, and what is there upon the earth that we can "deſire beſide thee? My fleſh and heart ſhall fail, "but thou art the ſtrength of my heart, and my por-"tion for ever."

Thirdly, There is conſolation in approaching to God. Alas! in this world, afflictions ſo abound, that conſolation is often our greateſt good. In how few days of this mortal life do we not feel the want of a comforter? Ever ſince the introduction of ſin into the earth, human life hath been a ſcene of miſery. Man is born to trouble, and ſore is the travel which is appointed to him under the ſun. We come into the world the moſt forlorn of all beings; the voice of ſorrow is heard from the birth; man ſighs on through every path of future life; and the grave is the only place of refuge, where the weary are at reſt. Sometimes, indeed, a gleam of joy intervenes, an interval of happineſs takes place. Fond man indulges the favourable hour. Then we promiſe to ourſelves the ſcenes of paradiſe; perpetual ſunſhine, and days without a cloud. But the brightneſs only ſhines to diſappear; the cloud comes again, and we awake to our wonted anxiety and ſorrow.

Not limited to our own perſonal woes, we are doomed to ſuffer for ſorrows not our own. We are not unconcerned ſpectators of human life. We are intereſted in every event that befals our fellow men. Sympathy makes us feel the diſtreſſes of others, and the beſt affections of the heart become the ſources of wo. How many deaths do we ſuffer in mourning over the friends that we have loſt! While we lament their unhappy or untimely fate, we cut ſhort the thread of our own days. The cords of love are broken, one after another; ſtring after ſtring is ſevered from the heart, till all our early attachments are diſſolved, till our ſad eyes have wept over every friend laid in the duſt, and till we become lonely and wretched as we at firſt began.

Under theſe afflictions, and from theſe ſorrows, devotion opens a retreat; the altar of God preſents a place of refuge; the ear of the Eternal is open to thy cry; the arm of the Almighty is ſtretched out to relieve thee. There is a ſanctuary where no evil can approach; there is an aſylum where no enemy can enter. In the pavilion of his preſence, God will hide thee in the time of trouble; in the ſecret of his tabernacle, he will cover thee in the day of danger. There the priſoners reſt in peace, and hear not the voice of the oppreſſor. There are the ſmall and the great, and the ſervant is free from his maſter. There the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and the weary are at reſt.

It is ſome conſolation, it is ſome relief, to open our hearts to men, and tell our ſorrows to a friend, who can give us no relief, but by mingling his tears with ours. What conſolation, what relief will it then give to open our hearts, and tell our ſorrows to that Friend above, who is ever gracious to hear, and ever mighty to ſave! To that Friend who never fails; who is afflicted in all our afflictions, and who keeps us as the apple of his eye! Art thou therefore oppreſſed with the calamities of life; is thy head bowed down with affliction, or thy heart broken with ſorrow? approach to the altar, go to God, preſent to him the prayer of thy heart, and he will ſend thee help from his holy hill.

Laſtly, In approaching to God, there is preparation for heaven. The objects among which we are converſant, have a wonderful power over the mind. External things make ſuch an impreſſion within, that the character is often formed from the ſituation.

The ſoul is aſſimilated to ſurrounding objects, and proportions itſelf to the ſphere in which it moves. When employed in little and in low things, it is contracted; when occupied in earthly matters, it is debaſed; but acquires enlargement and elevation in the preſence of what is grand and ſublime. By daily converſe with the world, and familiarity with material things, the ſoul is alienated from the life of God, and man, ſetting his affections on things below, becomes of the earth, earthy. But when we engage in the exerciſes of devotion, we counterwork the charm of material objects, we retire from the world and its temptations, and ſhut the door of the heart againſt every intruding gueſt that would diſturb us in approaching to God. Standing upon holy ground, we put off unhallowed affections, and impure deſires. From the preſence of the Lord every ſinful thought flies away. Our attention is turned from thoſe things that would raiſe guilty paſſions in the mind. Pure and ſpiritual ideas are preſented to view, and the perfections of Almighty God are ſet before our eyes. When theſe are before us, our admiration of them will increaſe, our love to them will be kindled, and we will endeavor to reſemble them in our own life. Thus, by approaching to God, we become like God. By devotion on earth, we anticipate the work of heaven. We join ourſelves, beforehand, to the ſociety of angels and bleſſed ſpirits above; we already enter on the delightful employment of eternity, and begin the ſong which is heard for ever around the throne of God.

Such, Chriſtians! are the advantages of approaching to God, and encompaſſing the altar. And if,

with pious affections, and a pure heart, we draw nigh unto God, God will draw nigh unto us. To the wide extent of his creation, to the great temple of heaven and earth, JEHOVAH prefers the heart of the pure and the pious. There he takes up his abode; there he delighteth to dwell. In the divine diſcourſe which our Lord delivered to his diſciples, the ſame night in which he was betrayed, there is a promiſe rich in conſolation. "If a man love me, he will "keep my words: and my Father will love him, "and we will come and make our abode with him." While this promiſe ſounds in your ears, I hope that your hearts correſpond to the ſtrain, and that you recal thoſe precious hours, when God manifeſted himſelf to you, ſo as he does not unto the world. When on former occaſions, he ſent his light and his truth; when the fountain of living waters has been opened, and the voice came to your ears, "Drink, and live for ever;" Did you not feel emotions which came from no created ſource, and taſte a joy which confeſſed its origin from heaven? Who can deſcribe the bleſſedneſs of that time, when a preſent Deity is felt? It is the joy of heaven upon earth; the happineſs of eternity in the moments of time.

SERMON XVI.

LUKE ii. 10.

—Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.—

THE coming of the Meſſiah is always foretold in ſcripture as a period of joy and triumph. The Patriarchs rejoiced when they ſaw his day afar off. All the Prophets take fire at this great occaſion, and riſe into ſtrains of rapture when they deſcribe the glory of the latter days, and the happineſs of the Meſſiah's reign. In the moſt beautiful colours they paint its arrival as a new æra of happy time, and as a general jubilee to the world. They repreſent it as accompanied with univerſal peace and proſperity; as effecting a renovation of nature, the return of innocence to earth, and the deſcent of God to dwell with men. "In thoſe days the wilderneſs "and the ſolitary place ſhall be glad; the deſert ſhall "rejoice and bloſſom like the roſe. They ſhall bloſ- "ſom abundantly: and rejoice with joy and with "ſinging. The glory of Lebanon ſhall be given "unto it; the excellency of Carmel and of Sharon. "The parched ground ſhall become a pool, and the "dry land ſprings of water. In the wilderneſs ſhall "waters break out, and ſtreams in the deſert.—The "light of the moon ſhall be as the light of the ſun, "and the light of the ſun ſhall be ſevenfold." When the heavens and the earth at firſt aroſe in beauty

from the hands of the Creator, the morning ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy. In like manner, when theſe new heavens and this new earth appeared, all the angelic hoſt broke forth into ſtrains of gratulation, aſcribing glory to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good-will towards fallen man.

Unhappily, the Jews, who were a groſs and carnal people, miſinterpreted the prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Meſſiah, took the magnificent ſtyle of prophecy for literal deſcription, and fondly imagined that theſe glad tidings of great joy announced temporal and earthly bleſſings. They looked for no better a country than the land of Canaan, and expected no other redemption than to be redeemed from the Roman yoke. The veil is now taken off from the Prophets, and we diſcern the Goſpel, not as meant to procure us poſſeſſion of the earth, and dominion over the nations, but as intended to make us partakers of eternal life, and to give us an inheritance in the heavens, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

The Goſpel, then, is a ſyſtem of ſpiritual joy. And, in treating of it in this light, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, conſider it as a method of inſtruction, enlightening the darkneſs, and diſpelling the ignorance of human nature: In the *ſecond* place, As a plan of redemption from the guilt of ſin: In the *third* place, As a ſcheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life; and, in the *fourth* place, As a ſyſtem of conſolation againſt the fear of death. Here are comprehended all the evils of human life; and if we find that the Goſpel brings us relief from all of them,

then it will appear to contain indeed, "Good ti-
"dings of great joy."

I am to ſhow you, then, in the firſt place, That, as a ſyſtem of joy, Chriſtianity enlightens the natural darkneſs of the mind, and gives us all requiſite information concerning the truths neceſſary to our happineſs.

Curioſity, or the deſire of knowledge, is one of the earlieſt emotions of the human ſoul. No ſooner does the mind arrive at the exerciſe of thought, than it proceeds to examine the objects around it, and to extend its reſearches wider and wider over the whole circuit of nature. One of the moſt obvious dictates of reaſon is the belief of a God. There are ſo many indications of wiſdom and contrivance in the works of nature; ſuch ſtriking diſplays of order and beauty; ſuch ſplendid demonſtrations of a plan eſtabliſhed, that an intelligent Mind is at once recogniſed, and a Deity, though inviſible in himſelf, is every where ſeen in his works. Accordingly, all nations have agreed in acknowledging and worſhipping a ſupreme Power, the Creator and Governor of all things. But although the light of nature reveals to us the exiſtence of a God, it gives us no materials whereon to form an opinion concerning his attributes. A mixed diſpenſation of things ſeems to prevail in the world. There are many indications of goodneſs, but there are alſo many appearances of evil. Providence ſeems equally to favour the good and the bad. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Reaſon is at a loſs what concluſion to draw from ſuch contradictory appearances, and amidſt the

clouds and the darkneſs that furround the paths of the Almighty, cannot diſcern that juſtice and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne. But a ſtate of uncertainty and ſuſpenſe, eſpecially about an object of ſuch great importance, is the moſt deplorable of all ſituations. To live and to die in ignorance and uncertainty, whether the Governor of the world be a tyrant or a friend, whether we are under the miſrule of hate, or the government of love, muſt ſit heavy upon the candid and inquiſitive mind, and give additional ſmart to all the ſorrows which imbitter human life. What beams of joy will break in upon ſuch benighted minds, when the Sun of Righteouſneſs appearing, ſcatters the clouds of ignorance and error, and lets in the pure light of heaven upon the darkneſs of the human condition? To make the diſcoveries of the Goſpel to ſuch perſons, is to reveal to them a father and a friend. To diſcover that God is love; that he is a God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf; that he adminiſters the affairs of the univerſe ſo as to iſſue in the general good; that he is for ever employing the attributes of his nature, his infinite wiſdom, his boundleſs goodneſs, and his Almighty power, to favour the cauſe of righteouſneſs, and to promote the happineſs of the good throughout the whole creation. Such views of Deity as theſe fill the mind with joy and with conſolation. The weary traveller has now got a ſhelter from the ſtorm. He has found a ſanctuary in the time of trouble; and he looks to the heavens *from whence cometh his aid.* The heart is fully at eaſe while it reſts on him that made it, and repoſes with perfect peace under the protection of everlaſting arms.

Further, Man in a ſtate of nature is equally ignorant concerning himſelf. He finds himſelf here a ſtranger in a wide world, where the powers and operations of nature are very imperfectly known; where both the cauſes and the iſſues of things are wrapt up in much darkneſs, and where he can only form uncertain conjectures from whence he comes, for what purpoſe he was brought into being, and whither he is to go when he departs from hence. If he looks back to his origin, he is loſt in uncertainty. Born to be at the head of the inferior creation, and to be the maſterpiece of the Almighty in this lower world, he hath at the ſame time appetites and paſſions, the abuſe of which degrades him below the level of the brutes that periſh. His dignity and his meanneſs; the excellence of his frame, and the degeneracy of his nature; the elevation of his underſtanding, and the corruption of his heart, form a contraſt which the philoſophy of ages could never reconcile. How could ſuch a creature come into the world? If he be the work of a wiſe and good being, whence come the ſeeds of evil that are latent in his heart? If he be the production of malignant beings, whence the ſeeds of goodneſs, and the lineaments of heaven, which, however obſcured, are to be found in his frame? Whatever ſuppoſition we take, we are beſet with inſuperable difficulties. But, change the ſcene, and look forward to his future lot, and he is ſtill more diſtreſſed and forlorn. He ſees his friends and companions, one after another, continually diſappearing. But whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlaſting darkneſs, or do they ſtill act in another ſcene? Is the

beam of heaven for ever extinguiſhed? Is the celeſtial fire which glowed in their hearts for ever quenched, and naught but aſhes left to mingle with the earth, and be blown around the world? Are their hopes limited to this life? Or, beyond the horizon which terminates their preſent proſpects, does a more beautiful and a more perfect ſcene preſent itſelf, where the wicked ſhall ceaſe from troubling, and where the weary ſhall be at reſt? If we conſult our affections, we ſhall be inclined to believe in a future ſtate. Nature is loath to quit its hold. The heart ſtill wiſhes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint, and indulges us with the pleaſant hopes of one day meeting again the companions which we dropped in life. The perfections of the Deity alſo favour theſe wiſhes of nature. If God be infinitely wiſe and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to ſee the light, and to depart for ever. Would a wiſe builder have erected ſuch a noble ſtructure, to laſt but for a moment? On the other hand, if we conſult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation ſurround us. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The animal that mingles with the earth never riſes to life again.

Theſe doubts and horrors are now removed, and this darkneſs deſtroyed, by the Goſpel of Chriſt. No ſooner did the day-ſpring ariſe from on high, but it became a light to lighten the Gentiles, and extended its radiance over the region and ſhadow of death. The nature of man is now unfolded, the origin of evil accounted for, and life and immortality brought to light. Our Saviour did not propoſe

theſe doctrines as the controvertible opinions of a private man: he taught them with the authority of God. Of his peculiar doctrines he gave us a proof in kind. Did he teach that the dead were to ariſe? As an infallible confirmation of it, he himſelf aroſe from the dead. The good man need not now be in anxiety about his future exiſtence. Come and behold the place where the Lord lay. Come and behold the place from which the Lord aroſe. You do not mourn as thoſe who have no hope. You commit the bodies of your deceaſed friends to the grave in the hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection. For we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we know that we ſhall in like manner revive. The ſound of the laſt trumpet ſhall pierce even the caverns of the tomb; the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God; the celeſtial fire ſhall again reanimate theſe aſhes, and a glorious body ſpring forth from the boſom of corruption. What a ſource of conſolation does this open to us in all the afflictions of life? Can that man deſpond and ſink under the evils of life, who has the proſpect of a bleſſed reſurrection and a happy immortality?

It has been thus endeavoured to ſhow you the advantages that we derive from Chriſtianity, in point of inſtruction. It was never my intention to exalt revelation at the expenſe of reaſon, or to eſtabliſh Chriſtianity upon the ruins of natural religion. The light of nature affords us many diſcoveries, and the religion of nature ſuggeſts many obligations to virtue. The heathens reaſoned well concerning the exiſtence of a ſupreme Cauſe; from the things which are ſeen, they inferred his eternal Power and Godhead, and

gave many excellent leſſons for the conduct of human life. But their diſcoveries had not the authority of uncontroverted truth, and their precepts wanted the obligation of laws. They were the private opinions of mere men, who had no commiſſion to enact articles of faith, and who had no authority to eſtabliſh laws for the conduct of human life. Their diſcoveries did not even carry conviction to their own minds. They doubted concerning points the moſt important and the moſt eſſential to the happineſs of a rational mind. If, from the order and beauty of the natural world, they inferred the exiſtence and the power of God; from the irregularities and evils of the moral world, they were led to doubt concerning his wiſdom and goodneſs. The immortality of the ſoul was rather the object of their wiſhes, than of their firm belief. The law of nature, amidſt the multiplicity of vicious and criminal cuſtoms, was almoſt totally obliterated. The ſenſe of moral good and evil, amidſt the univerſal degeneracy and depravity of manners, was in danger of being altogether loſt. So general, ſo groſs was the darkneſs which long involved the nations, ſo deep and thick did the cloud ſit over the moral world, that the wiſeſt of the ancient philoſophers thought it was a neceſſary ſtep in the Deity, in order to aſcertain his perfections, and vindicate his ways to men, that a Prophet ſhould deſcend from heaven, clothed with a Divine commiſſion, to make a revelation of the Divine will.

But they laboured under a difficulty ſtill more dreadful than ignorance, that was, a ſenſe of guilt. This leads us to the *ſecond* head of diſcourſe, To conſider the Goſpel as a plan of redemption from the guilt of ſin.

When the ſins of a criminal life roſe up before them, horror of conſcience overwhelmed them. Unenlightend nature preſented nothing to their eye but an offended Judge, arrayed in all his terrors. The violated law called aloud for reparation. Juſtice unſheathed her flaming ſword. The mercy of the Judge was altogether unknown. All was darkneſs and diſmay, without one beam of hope. It was in this dreadful dilemma that, in order to appeaſe the wrath of the incenſed Deity, they had recourſe to ſacrifices and to the ſhedding of ſo much blood. It was this that drove them to violate the ſtrongeſt and moſt ſacred laws of nature; drove them to torture their own fleſh before the ſhrine of the offended God, and terrible to tell, drove them—drove the tender parent to take his ſon, his firſt-born ſon, and, with his own trembling hands, to ſhed his blood as a ranſom for his ſoul! The grand inquiry of the heathen world was that with which the Prophet Micah introduces the king of Moab, "Wherewith ſhall I come "before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the High "God?"

As a ſenſe of moral good and evil is implanted in the mind, and as a principle of conſcience, condemning ſin and approving righteouſneſs, is univerſally felt, we ſee and we feel, by ſad experience, that all men have ſinned, have come ſhort of the glory of God, and that, without an atonement, there could be neither joy nor peace in the heart of man.

Further, It was neceſſary that, in this atonement, proviſion ſhould be made for delivering men from the ſtate of degeneracy and imperfection, that they might not again fall into deadly ſin, and ſtand in

need of a new atonement. In conſequence of that original corruption derived to us from our firſt parents, our nature is degenerated, and our moral abilities impaired ſo, that no man can yield perfect obedience to the law of God. It would therefore be of little conſequence to blot out our tranſgreſſions for the time paſt, unleſs we were alſo to be delivered from the dominion of ſin in the time to come. To be always falling into ſin, to be always ſtanding in need of new acts of indemnity and forgiveneſs, is neither conſiſtent with the dignity of the Divine government, nor with the perfection of a rational and immortal nature. Accordingly, the great atonement propoſed in the Goſpel, not only provides for our redemption from the wrath to come, but alſo for our reſtoration to the image of God. From the croſs of Chriſt, virtue flows to the world, and healing to the nations. In conſequence of his ſufferings and death, our Saviour is now aſcended to the right hand of the Majeſty in the heavens, to adminiſter the affairs of his kingdom, and diſpenſe the treaſures of the new covenant. He retains our nature, and repreſents our perſons in the preſence of God, and makes interceſſion with the Father in our behalf. He ſends down his ſanctifying Spirit to repair the ruins of our nature; to create in us the clean heart; to renew within us the right ſpirit; to lead us on from grace to grace, and from ſtrength to ſtrength, till we perfect holineſs in the fear of the Lord. Having thus recovered the original honor of our frame, and being reſtored to the image of God, he tranſlates us to the manſions of immortality above, where theſe good tidings of great joy are a ſubject of praiſe amidſt an

innumerable company of angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect.

We proceed to the *third* general head of diſcourſe, To conſider the Goſpel as a ſcheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life.

Ever ſince the introduction of ſin into the world, human life hath been a ſcene of miſery. Man that is born of a woman is of few days; and few as they are, they are full of trouble. He is doomed to ſuffer from the womb. When he comes into the world, he enters on a ſtate of pain; and from the cradle to the grave, his life is a pilgrimage of ſorrow. Where is the kingdom; where is the city; where is the family; where is the individual that is exempted from affliction? It enters the palaces of the great, as well as the cottages of the low; it invades the throne of the king, as well as the hut of the peaſant; and ſcarce are the ſanctuaries and the altars of the Lord, aſylums againſt its approach. The calamities of life are always great; but when the mind is under the impreſſion of melancholy, and bleeds from recent ſorrow, then are they felt in extreme. The cloud ſits deep upon the face of things; the proſpect before us is dark and lurid; and the mind, if not ſupported, would ſink under its woes. It is the great excellence, my brethren, of the Chriſtian religion, that it abounds with conſolations in all the evils of life. To the upright, ſays the Scripture, light ſhall ariſe in the midſt of darkneſs. Thoſe who are weary and heavy laden with their woes, if they come to Chriſt, he will give them reſt.

The firſt conſolation which the Goſpel propoſes to us, is, That there is a particular Providence which

watches over human affairs. It is part of the glad tidings revealed to us in the Goſpel, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; that although his throne be in the heavens, and though the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he condeſcends to viſit the earth, to take up his abode and dwell with men. He who counts the number of the ſtars, numbers alſo the hairs of our head; a ſparrow cannot fall to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father. The moſt ordinary, as well as the moſt caſual events, are under the direction of that arm which reaches from heaven to earth. Ever watching over the world, there is an eye above, which ſlumbers not nor ſleeps. The archer may draw the bow at a venture; but the arrow is directed by an higher hand. This will adminiſter relief to the mind in all the afflictions of life. Truſting to the Providence of God, the devout mind will reſt in hope, and break forth into joy, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad; the "Lord reigneth, let the multitude of the iſles rejoice. "His kingdom ruleth over all, and he will make all "things co-operate for the good of thoſe who love "him." Shall not I therefore truſt in him who is ever preſent to help me in the time of need? Are not theſe perfections, which are equal to the government of the whole ſyſtem of nature, more than ſufficient to direct my little concerns? My God is a preſent help in the time of trouble. He is not far off when grief is near, nor like an abſent friend to the diſtreſſed. Let the darkneſs of the tempeſt ſurround me; let the winds blow, and the waves rage, I have an intereſt in the Ruler of the ſtorm; I have an intereſt in him, who can ſay to the winds "ceaſe," and to the waves "be ſtill."

In the next place, afflictions take their riſe, not from the wrath, but from the love of God. Did we believe that the world was governed by a malignant being, who made ſport of human miſery, and took a malicious pleaſure in puniſhing his creatures; did we conſider ourſelves as under the dominion of hatred, as objects of the divine vengeance, and purſued by the Almighty as victims devoted to perdition, ſuch thoughts would make us miſerable indeed. They would ſharpen the arrows of adverſity, and mingle poiſon into the bitter cup which we are doomed to drink. Then might we cry out with Job, in the hour of deſpair, "I will ſpeak in the anguiſh of my "ſpirit, I will complain in the bitterneſs of my ſoul. "The terrors of the Lord ſet themſelves in array "againſt me. The arrows of the Almighty are "within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh up my "ſpirit. Why haſt thou ſet me as a mark againſt "thee? My ſoul chooſeth ſtrangling and death rath-"er than life." Theſe doubts and terrors are now removed. Fear not, O man! who ſtruggleſt under the adverſities of life, I bring you good tidings of great joy; the afflictions which thou endureſt are not the ſtripes of an hard maſter, who ſeeks thy deſtruction; they are the chaſtiſements of a kind father, who puniſhes only to reform. The God of love has no pleaſure in the miſery, or in the death of his creatures. His eye overflows with pity, whilſt his hand is lifted up to ſtrike. Whilſt he bruiſes, he binds up the wound. This ſurely will adminiſter conſolations to the wounded in mind, and ſpeak peace to the broken in heart, when they reflect that the evils in their lot are a part of His providence, who

doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; that they are not marks of his wrath, but indications of his love.

Further, As a conſolation to the afflicted and diſtreſſed, Chriſtianity aſſures us, that the various occurrences in human life are not accidental, nor detached events, but parts of a great plan that was concerted in the councils of Heaven before the world began, and is going on from age to age. If the moral world were a chaos without form, and void of order; if every event in life was ſeparate, unconnected and final, men, under the preſſure of affliction, would often have occaſion to complain. But, when we take in the diſcoveries of revelation, and behold a general order of things eſtabliſhed, and a great plan going on; when we conſider that every particular event is a part of the great ſyſtem of Providence, and conduces to form a perfect whole; when we call to mind that no part of our life is an ultimate event, but has a reference to a future ſtate, and is only the means to an end, we will acquieſce in the eſtabliſhed order of nature, and follow on, active and cheerful, wherever we are called by Providence. In the early part of our life, when we are under the diſcipline of a maſter, we are inſtructed in arts, and trained to exerciſes, of which we know not then the meaning, nor the uſe. This life is but the infancy of our being, and a ſtate of moral diſcipline for a better world; let us not therefore be ſurpriſed or murmur, if many things fall out which ſeem adverſe to our preſent good. When the Chriſtian conſiders that the ſufferings of the preſent life are connected with the enjoyments of heaven, and with the improvements of

eternity, the unfavourable and hoſtile appearances of this world will vaniſh from his view. Familiariſed to this grand and magnificent ſyſtem of things, he will not complain concerning the conduct of Providence, nor think the univerſe in confuſion when he is in diſorder. He does not look upon himſelf, as ſelf-love would ſuggeſt, as a whole ſeparated and detached from every other part of nature; he regards himſelf in the light in which he imagines the great Spirit of the world regards him. He enters into the ſentiments of the Divine Being, and conſiders himſelf as a particle, as an atom in an infinite ſyſtem, which muſt and ought to be diſpoſed of according to the good and the conveniency of the whole.

Laſtly, As a ground of joyful conſolation to the diſtreſſed, let me remind you, that afflictions are not only requiſite parts of our education for heaven, but that they are alſo neceſſary means of our improvement in the virtues and graces of the divine life. Adapted to the progreſſive and probationary ſtate of fallen man, the adminiſtration of Providence aſſumes a variety of forms. Light and ſhade, the ſunſhine of proſperity, and the ſtorm of adverſity, ſucceed each other, and chequer the ſcene of human life. In this mixed diſpenſation of ſuffering and enjoyment, the wiſdom of Providence ſhines conſpicuous. Were we always to be favoured with the ſmile of proſperity, and the candle of the Lord ever to ſhine upon our head, we would be apt to grow intoxicated with pride, to prove ungrateful to the Author of our being, and reſerve to ourſelves ſome part of that incenſe which we ought to burn upon his altars. On the other hand, were we always to be under the cloud of

adverſity, were Providence for ever to frown upon our deſigns, we would be ready to reſign ourſelves to deſpair, and cry out with the good men of old, "Is "the mercy of Heaven clean gone? Will he be fa- "vourable no more?" This mixed diſpenſation of Providence is not only moſt favourable to religion, but is alſo beſt adapted to the nature of man. Man is made for ſuffering as well as for action. There are many principles in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, and many qualities of the heart, which would lie for ever latent, were they not called forth to action by the adverſities of life. Man was never deſtined by his Maker to ſlumber on the couch of repoſe, and to baſk in the ſunny ſeaſon: he was appointed to labour and to action; to ſtruggle with the tempeſt; to weather the winter of affliction; to encounter peril; to endure pain, and, by Chriſtian magnanimity and heroiſm, by patience, by perſeverance and invincible vigour, to reach the crown of glory which is reſerved on high for all the ſons of God. The afflictions of life preſent an occaſion for this ſpirit to exert itſelf, and for theſe graces to appear. If there were no adverſities in human life, the ſcene of action would be limited, the career of virtue would be ſhortened, and a wide field of moral glory be loſt to the world. Had we no trials in our lot, what need were there for the exerciſe of patience and reſignation to the Divine will, which form ſuch a ſtriking part of the Chriſtian character? Had we no afflictions to encounter, and no evils to fear, what occaſion would there be for that ſtrength of mind which enables us to brave the dangers of life, to bid defiance to the evil day, and to repoſe, at all times,

firm and unſhaken, upon the arm of the Almighty? Were there no dangers to combat, why ſhould we take unto ourſelves the whole armour of God, the ſword of the Spirit, the ſhield of faith, and the helmet of ſalvation? Not only does adverſity preſent the occaſion of ſpiritual improvement, but has alſo in every age produced an hoſt of ſaints, who, clothed with this divine armour, have fought the good fight, and have come forth conquerors. You have recorded to you the faith of Abraham; you have recorded the meekneſs of Moſes; you have recorded the patience of Job; but had it not been for the trials which they underwent, the dangers they had to combat, and the diſtreſſes they had to bear, their glory might have periſhed, and their names been loſt in oblivion. As the nightingale, it is ſaid, when bereft of her young, fills the woods with the muſic of wo, and, from the impulſe of ſorrow, warbles her ſweeteſt ſtrains; ſo, from the wounded mind, and from the broken ſpirit, the fervour of devotion, and the eloquence of prayer, come up with ſuch pathetic memorial before the throne, that the Divine ear liſtens delighted. True religion, true virtue, brightens in diſtreſs; ſhe emerges from the deep with tenfold radiance, and never ſhines with ſuch tranſcendent, ſuch triumphant, ſuch immortal beauty, as when wandering through the darkneſs of an eclipſe. You ſee, then, that in theſe paths you are in the company of the good, and are encompaſſed with a cloud of witneſſes. You are not left alone to climb the arduous aſcent. On theſe mountains, the feet of patriarchs, the feet of prophets, and the feet of martyrs, have trode. On theſe mountains, a greater than patriarchs, than prophets, than martyrs, appeared.

The *fourth* and *laſt* thing propoſed, was, To conſider Chriſtianity as affording a joyful conſolation againſt the fear of death.

Many and various are the evils to which human life is ſubjected. To finiſh the mighty ſum of them, and to make the ſcene end with pain, as it began with ſorrow, comes the evil of death. The king of terrors, with his black train of attendants, even when ſeen at a diſtance, makes the firmeſt knee to ſhake, and the ſtouteſt heart to tremble; and, when exerting his influence upon feeble minds, and aſſiſted by the power of the imagination, has kept multitudes all their days under the cloud of melancholy, and under ſubjection to bondage. It is the great excellence of the Chriſtian Religion, that as it affords conſolation in all the evils of life, ſo it alſo provides a remedy againſt the fear of death. Hence the prophet, looking forward unto the days of the Meſſiah, breaks out into theſe ſtrains of exultation: "I will redeem "them from death: I will ranſom them from the "power of the grave: O death, I will be thy plague; "O grave, I will be thy deſtruction." Hence ſays the Apoſtle Paul, "Foraſmuch as the children were "partakers of fleſh and blood, he himſelf alſo took "part of the ſame, that he might deſtroy him that "had the power of death, that is the devil, and de"liver them who, through fear of death, were all "their lifetime ſubject to bondage."

The evils attending death to men, in a ſtate of nature, are manifold.

One of theſe is the uncertainty of our future deſtination. Reaſon gives us little information concerning the ſtate of the ſoul when it departs from the

body. We ſee the body mingle with its kindred elements, and return to the duſt from whence it was taken. But what becomes of the ſoul? Does it too ceaſe to exiſt, and vaniſh into air? Or does it ſtill live and act in another ſcene? Here we are loſt in conjectures and uncertainty. We ſee the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not aſſuredly of any morning that awaits him. The ocean ſpreads before us vaſt and dark, but we know not with certainty if it will waft us to any ſhore. What a diſconſolate ſituation of mind is this! Afflicted with the view of our paſt life; tormented with preſent pain; and hovering over an abyſs from which we are uncertain if we ſhall ever emerge! To paſs for ever into the dominion of darkneſs; to go we know not where! Loſt in theſe doubts, troubled with the fears of futurity, the Roman Emperor addreſſed his departing ſoul: "O my ſoul, thou art "leaving thy once loved haunts, thy former com-"panions, and thy wonted joys; but into what un-"known regions and dark abodes art thou now go-"ing? Alas! thou canſt not tell!" Theſe doubts and perplexities are now removed by the coming of Chriſt. When the Sun of Righteouſneſs roſe in our region, it diſpelled the ſhadows of the everlaſting evening; it poured its radiance upon the path of immortality, and brought full to view the ſcenes of the inviſible world. The future ſcenes of happineſs and glory are not only diſcovered by the Goſpel of Jeſus, but are ſet before our eyes. In the inſpired oracles, we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; we ſee the dead ariſing from their graves; a mighty army of ſaints and martyrs ſpringing with joy

from duſt and corruption. We ſee Jeſus upon the throne, and the faithful at his right hand. We hear the happy ſentence pronounced upon them, "Come "ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom pre- "pared for you before the foundations of the world "were laid." We ſee them with palms of victory in their hands, and with crowns of glory on their heads, aſcending up on high with their Lord, and ſitting down with him upon his throne.

Another evil attending on death is the ſenſe of our ſins and tranſgreſſions, which then riſing up to our memory in black colours, overwhelm us with horror of mind. But to thoſe who receive the privileges of Chriſtianity, the bed of death will not be a ſcene of terror. With a faith which overcometh the world, they give up their ſouls into the hands of him who made them. "I have indeed ſinned, moſt merciful "Father, againſt Heaven and in thy ſight. Mine in- "iquities compaſs me about. I am covered with con- "fuſion, and condemn myſelf, and often have been "afraid leſt thy judgment ſhould confirm the ſentence "of my own heart. But thou art merciful and gra- "cious. Thou haſt no pleaſure in death. I am un- "worthy of the leaſt of all thy mercies. But wor- "thy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive bleſſing "and glory and honor and power. In his death I "ſee the price of my redemption. In his life I ſee "the path which leads to immortality. In his reſ- "urrection I ſee the proof of my own, and evidence "of my immortal exiſtence. I have accepted the "offers of thy mercy, and have endeavoured to walk "worthy of the vocation wherewith I was called. "With whatever failings I may have been encom-

" paſſed, thou knoweſt that it has been the ſtudy of " my life to approve myſelf to thee, and to obtain " the teſtimony of a good conſcience. Truſting to " thy mercy, and relying on the merits of my Re- " deemer, Father of all, I come to thee! With the " joy of the Patriarch, I follow thy call into the land " unknown."

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to ſet before you ſome of the joyful conſolations derived from the Goſpel of Jeſus; conſolations which not only ſerve to ſupport and animate us under the afflictions of this preſent life, but which alſo enter within the veil, and conſtitute our happineſs through everlaſting ages. But before I conclude, regard to my duty prompts me to warn and admoniſh you, that though the glad tidings of the Goſpel are proclaimed to all, yet the conſolations which they contain are not intended for, and are not conferred upon, all who hear the Goſpel. It is only they who believe, who repent, who reform, that will ever reap any ſolid advantage from the Chriſtian religion. The profeſſion of Chriſtianity will avail us nothing. It will avail us nothing to ſay that we have faith. We may eaſily deceive ourſelves, and make a lively imagination paſs for a ſtrong faith. But unleſs our faith purify the heart, unleſs it work by love, unleſs it produce the fruits of righteouſneſs, it is no better than the faith of the devils, who believe and tremble. Let me therefore perſuade you, never ſo much as in thought, to ſeparate the ideas of faith and morality; of belief in Chriſtianity and a good life. If you make the attempt, you are undone for ever.

SERMON XVII.

ACTS xvii. 30.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

THIS is part of a ſermon which the Apoſtle Paul delivered at Athens. The Athenians were the moſt ingenious and moſt illuſtrious people of Greece. Situated in a happy climate, and bleſſed with the higheſt degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the ſciences and arts. Theſe they carried to ſuch a pitch of perfection, as gained the palm from the contending world, and has attracted the eyes and admiration of all ſucceeding ages. But to ſhow the darkneſs and the ignorance of the human mind when not enlightened by the wiſdom which cometh from above, as ſoon as they turned themſelves to religion, they diſplayed nothing but their own abſurdities and follies. In place of a rational and liberal form of religion, a groſs and ſtupid idolatry univerſally prevailed; in place of the true God, they bowed the knee to a dumb idol; and inſtead of the worſhip of the heart, conſecrated to his ſervice impure and profane obſervances. Zealous to deſtroy this fabric of ſuperſtition, the Apoſtle Paul, riſing in the midſt of an aſſembly that was convened on the hill of Mars, reproved thoſe maſters of ſcience, thoſe lights of the Heathen world, with the boldneſs and the majeſty of an apoſtle of

the Lord. " Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in " all things ye are too ſuperſtitious:—the times of " this ignorance God winked at; but now command- " eth all men every where to repent."

Repentance towards God is the great and leading duty enjoined both in the Old and in the New Teſtament. Along with every revelation of the Divine will; along with every new commiſſion to prophets and holy men to preach this Divine will, the duty of repentance is always inculcated in the ſtrongeſt terms. The patriarch Noah preached repentance to the world before the flood. John the Baptiſt began his public miniſtry by preaching the doctrine of repentance. " Except ye repent, ye ſhall periſh," was the awful denunciation of our Lord. And his apoſtles conſtantly began or ended their ſermons with exhortations to this duty. This meſſage, ſo often delivered to the world, I now addreſs to you; and demand your ſerious attention to this moſt important ſubject. And, in further treating upon it, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, explain to you the nature of repentance; and, *ſecondly*, Lay before you the motives which ought to influence your minds to the practice of this duty.

The *firſt* thing propoſed, was, To explain the nature of true repentance.

Repentance unto life, as it is well defined in that excellent ſummary of theology, the Shorter Catechiſm, is, " A ſaving grace, whereby a ſinner, out of " a true ſenſe of his ſin, and apprehenſion of the " mercy of God in Chriſt, doth, with grief and ha- " tred of his ſin, turn from it unto God, with full " purpoſe of, and endeavour after, new obedience."

According to this definition, repentance includes, *firſt*, A true ſenſe of ſin; *ſecondly*, Grief and hatred of ſin; *thirdly*, Apprehenſion of the mercy of God in Chriſt, the forſaking of ſin, and endeavouring after new obedience.

Firſt, A true ſenſe of ſin. This muſt be the groundwork of all the reſt, becauſe it is impoſſible to hate what we do not feel. It is impoſſible to conceive a hatred and averſion againſt a thing of which we are not ſenſible, or to flee from a danger of which we have no apprehenſion. Where there is no ſenſe of ſin, therefore, there can be no repentance. Accordingly the Phariſee, who truſted in himſelf that he was righteous, was too proud, even when he was praying to God, to confeſs any guilt of his own. "God, I thank thee," ſays he, "that I am not as "other men are." He was conſcious, it ſeems, of no ſin, though inwardly full of rottenneſs and hypocriſy. Such inſenſibility is a certain ſign of a hardened and impenitent heart, and can proceed from nothing but a groſs and conceited ignorance, a wretched inconſideration, or a long continuance in ſin, that has rendered the conſcience callous and paſt feeling. This firſt ſtep of repentance ſuppoſes the ſinner, in the firſt place, to be feelingly affected with a ſenſe of his ſins; to have his mind enlightened and his conſcience awake[illegible] the word of God; to be convinced from thence [illegible]he irregularity of his ways, and their contrariety [illegible] the holineſs of the Divine nature; to labour under the load of his guilt; and in the conſciouſneſs of his own ill deſerving, to be ready to ſink under the number and the weight of his tranſgreſſions. Such were the ſentiments of Da-

vid's heart, and ſuch the confeſſion of his tongue. "I acknowledge my tranſgreſſion; my ſin is ever "before me; mine iniquities are gone over my head; "as a burden they are too heavy for me." This ſenſe of ſin is often accompanied with the emotions of fear. For when the ſinner, already convicted in his own conſcience, begins to reflect upon his paſt life, and at the ſame time to look up to God whom he has offended, and forwards to eternity, upon the brink of which he daily ſtands ſhivering; what a ſpectacle of terror muſt this be to a man who has been long ſpiritually blind, and whoſe eyes are but juſt opened to ſee this ſtartling ſcene! And behold, behind him a formidable troop of ſins; ſins red as crimſon, and numberleſs as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore! Above, a holy and a juſt God, the Judge of the world, armed with the thunders of his wrath! Before him, the infernal world diſcloſing all its horrors, and ready to ſwallow him up in perdition! Doubtleſs the terrors of the Lord, when thus ſet in array againſt a ſelf-condemned ſinner, will fill him with fear and diſmay, eſpecially when he conſiders that God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.

The *ſecond* ſtep of repentance is being affected with a grief and hatred of ſin. The former was a ſelfiſh feeling; this is a generous paſſion. The former reſpects ſin as ruinous to the ſinner; this regards it as offenſive to God. When the penitent is already affected with a deep ſenſe of the danger of his ſin, how will it wound his mind, and pierce him to the heart, to conſider that he has not only been long an enemy to himſelf, but alſo an enemy to

God; to conſider that he has treſpaſſed ſo far upon infinite goodneſs; that he has dallied ſo long with infinite juſtice; that he has miſpent the precious talents committed to him of Heaven; that he has abuſed the faculties of his immortal ſoul; that he has been defacing the image of God his maker; and that with his own hands he has been excluding himſelf from happineſs, from heaven, and from the preſence of the Lord. Theſe, and ſuch alarming thoughts, pierce to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit; enough to conſtrain the ſorrowful penitent to lift up his eyes in the midſt of his torment, and to cry out with Job in the bitterneſs of his ſoul, "I "have ſinned, and what ſhall I anſwer to thee, O "thou Preſerver of men? Alas! the arrows of the "Almighty are within me! the poiſon of them "drinketh up my ſpirit. But what grieves me moſt "is, that I have offended thee, the Author of my "life, and the Preſerver of my being; that I have "ſinned againſt ſo much goodneſs, and provoked ſuch "tender mercy. Mine iniquities deſerve thy wrath "and vengeance. But thy goodneſs reacheth from "heaven to earth. Thy mercy, like thyſelf, is infi-"nite. Let this remorſe which I now feel, be the "only puniſhment of my ſin; and let me not be fi-"nally delivered over to the tormentors. This I re-"queſt and pray on account of the merit of my Re-"deemer. His righteouſneſs is all-ſufficient and mer-"itorious. By it may I obtain favour and accept-"ance with thee, and be tranſlated from the king-"dom of darkneſs into the kingdom of God."

The *third* ſtep in repentance towards God, is an apprehenſion of the mercy of God in Chriſt, and a

forſaking of ſin. This is properly an act of faith. Faith and repentance are twin graces of the ſoul, and can never be ſeparated. True repentance includes faith, and true faith includes repentance. The mercy of God through a Redeemer being proclaimed in the Goſpel, and a new and living way to the holieſt of all being ſet open by the blood of Jeſus, the true penitent flies for refuge to the hope ſet before him, and lays hold on eternal life. He forſakes his ſins, and walks in newneſs of life. He begins with alacrity to run the race ſet before him, and feels to his bleſſed experience, that the ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and that all her paths are peace. This is the crowning act of true repentance, and the teſt of its ſincerity. That is not true repentance, when the ſinner, after feeling ſome compunctions of mind, ſome touches of remorſe, forms a few feeble reſolutions, which he breaks at the firſt approach of temptation. He is not a true penitent, who, after mourning over his old ſins, begins a new courſe of wickedneſs. This is only changing one ſin for another. A man who has ſpent his youth in profuſion and extravagance, may devote his riper years to avarice and the cares of the world. Such a perſon is indeed a different man, but he is not a penitent. In like manner, a perſon who has been at the head of the follies and the vices of the world, who has taken the lead in all faſhionable and criminal gratifications, may grow tired of ſuch a courſe of life, as human nature will tire of every thing: ſuch a perſon may take a fit of devotion, and ruſh into a variety of gloomy ſuperſtitions and ſeverities; but this is not true repentance. This is only paſſing from one error

to another. This is only giving a different direction to your paſſions. Repentance muſt effect a thorough change, or it is no repentance at all. Neither is he a true penitent, who, after being affected with remorſe for ſin, falls into the ſame courſe again; who is always ſinning and always repenting; and who goes on in a ſad circle of making reſolutions, and breaking them as ſoon as they are made. True repentance is repentance from dead works to ſerve the living God. It conſiſts in confeſſing and forſaking our ſins. It conſiſts in denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and abounding in the fruits of righteouſneſs unto eternal life.

I do not mean by this, that any man in this life is altogether free from ſin. Imperfections cleave to the beſt. Who can ſay that he has made his hands clean, or his heart pure? Good men oftentimes may be off their guard; they may be ſurpriſed in the hour of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault; but they will never ſin upon a plan; they will never make a ſyſtem of iniquity; they will not deliberately concert plots of wickedneſs upon their beds, and riſe up to execute with warmth what they have contrived with coolneſs. The grace of God does not act by fits and ſtarts; is not a tranſient but an abiding principle. The Chriſtian is fixed and immoveable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. He is not of thoſe apoſtates, mentioned by the Apoſtle Jude, who reſemble the morning clouds, that are ever varying their form, and are carried about with every wind: who reſemble wandering ſtars, to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever. But he advances from ſtrength to ſtrength; his path is like the light of the

morning, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is one other part of repentance which I have not yet mentioned, and which merits your ſerious attention; that is, making reſtitution and reparation, as far as lies in your power, for the evils you have done. "If I have wronged any man," ſaid Zaccheus when he repented, "lo I reſtore him fourfold." Have you wronged any man in his property? Have you taken away his goods? Make reſtitution. Have you wronged any man in his reputation? Have you taken away his good name? Make reparation: confeſs that you were a defamer: confeſs that you were a liar. Have you offended and injured any one? Aſk his forgiveneſs. Let no falſe ſhame hinder you from doing your duty. You have good cauſe to be aſhamed. Be always aſhamed to offend; but never bluſh for your returning virtue. Let no falſe ſhame, therefore, no fooliſh obſtinacy, no pride of heart, prevent you from a thorough reformation. Better be expoſed to ſhame here, than be doomed hereafter to everlaſting pains.

The *ſecond* thing propoſed, was, To lay before you the motives to repentance.

And, in the *firſt* place, The ſuperior light and information derived to the world by the Chriſtian religion, concerning the rule of righteouſneſs according to which we ought to conduct our lives, ſuggeſts a ſtrong motive and inducement to repentance. God indeed never left himſelf without a witneſs in the world. He made the firmament bright with his glory, and commanded the heavens with all their hoſt to declare his handiwork. With his own finger

he inſcribed the laws of juſtice and of virtue upon the heart of man. Attentive to this voice of God within, and aſſiſted by thoſe impreſſions of Divinity without, the moral teachers among the Gentiles ſtruck out many uſeful diſcoveries, and taught many valuable leſſons of wiſdom to the world. They wandered not in the dark concerning the eſſentials of natural religion. They were not ignorant of the chief duties of life. The inviſible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, they diſcovered by the works of creation; and having the law of nature written in their hearts, they were a law unto themſelves. But the defect which they laboured under, was the want of authority to enforce the diſcoveries which they made, and the want of a proper ſanction to the rules of life which they eſtabliſhed. When keen and violent, the paſſions of men puſh them forward; they will not be reſtrained by the voice of reaſon and philoſophy. On theſe occaſions, men will reply to ſuch an inſtructor, "Who gave "thee a commiſſion to teach and reform the world? "Did the voice of Heaven come to thine ears? Who "inveſted thee with authority and dominion over "the mind? Who appointed thee inſtructor of the "nations, and legiſlator of the moral world?" The heathen teachers could pretend to no ſuch authority. But Jeſus of Nazareth was inveſted with a divine commiſſion. He deſcended from heaven to teach the will of God upon earth. He performed miracles in cofirmation of his religion. He ſet the ſeal of heaven to the doctrines which he taught, and guarded the laws which he eſtabliſhed with the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments. Such was the dif-

ference betwixt a human teacher and a prophet of the Lord; and ſuch ought to be the difference betwixt the lives of heathens and the conduct of Chriſtians. What ſignifies the ſuperior excellency of your religion, unleſs its ſuperiority appear in your life? What avails the light to you, if ye continue to walk in darkneſs? Unleſs ye repent, it had been better for you that the kingdom of God had never come amongſt you. If ye ſtill walk in the region and ſhadow of death, it had been better that the Day-ſpring from on high had never riſen over your benighted land. The heathens ſhall riſe up in judgment againſt you, and ſhall condemn you. It ſhall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, thoſe cities of ſin, thoſe monuments of the vengeance of God to all ſucceeding times; it ſhall be more tolerable for theſe, than for thoſe wicked Chriſtians, who have diſregarded the voice which ſpoke from heaven; who have profaned that bleſſed name by which they were called; and who, by their obſtinacy and impenitence, have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were ſanctified an unholy thing.

A *ſecond* motive and encouragement to repentance, is the hope and proſpect of ſucceſs. Before the introduction of Chriſtianity, when the world lay in darkneſs as well as in wickedneſs, a ſenſe of guilt burdening the conſcience, and a dread of future puniſhment as conſequent upon that guilt, drove the nations to a variety of expedients, in order to avert the vengeance of Heaven, and make an atonement for their ſins. Hence various rites and ceremonies were inſtituted. Hence ſo many ſacrifices were offered up,

and ſo much blood was ſhed. Reaſon indeed could have told them that theſe means were unavailable; that the blood of bulls and of goats, and the aſhes of a heifer, could never take away ſin. But reaſon could not aſſure them, that any other means, that even their repentance, would be effectual to that end. Here Revelation ſteps in to our aid. The Goſpel aſſures us, that the wrath of God is not only averted from men, that He is not only reconciled, but alſo that he is a God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf. The gate of mercy is ſet open by the blood of Jeſus; and an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away is promiſed to all thoſe who ſincerely repent of their ſins, to all who believe and obey the Goſpel. He that confeſſeth and returneth ſhall find mercy. The ſacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite ſpirit; a broken and a contrite heart the Lord will not deſpiſe. Thus ſaith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, "whoſe name is Holy, I dwell in the "high and holy place, with him alſo that is of a hum-"ble and a contrite ſpirit, and who trembleth at my "word." Seeing then that the favour of God, and all the bleſſings of the new covenant, are promiſed to true repentance, will you by your impenitence and unbelief cut yourſelves off from theſe bleſſings? When ſuch ſtrong conſolation is offered, will you not fly for refuge to the hope ſet before you? When heaven is opened for your reception, will you refuſe to enter in? When the fruits of the tree of life are preſented to you, will you not put forth your hand, and take and eat and live for ever?

A *third* motive to repentance is the aſſiſtance of

the Spirit which the Goſpel offers. Chriſtianity is called the miniſtration of the Spirit. The effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt on the day of Pentecoſt upon the Apoſtles, which enabled them to ſpeak all languages and to work miracles, was extraordinary, and intended to ceaſe with that age. But the heavenly Comforter ſtill abides with all the diſciples of Chriſt, to guide them into all truth, and incline them to the practice of every duty. The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the glory of the latter days, or times of the Meſſiah, ſays, "It ſhall come to paſs in thoſe days, "that I will pour out upon the houſe of David, and "upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of "grace and of ſupplications, and they ſhall look upon "me whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn "and be in bitterneſs." The ſpirit of grace and of ſupplication then poured out abundantly, ſhall impreſs men with ſorrow and contrition for their ſin; ſhall incline them to renounce their former ſinful ways, to repent of their paſt tranſgreſſions, and to walk in newneſs of life. This operation of the Divine Spirit upon the mind, does not impel men to action by mechanical influence, and obſtruct the exerciſe of their natural powers. The grace of God does not turn man into a machine. It draws him, as the Scripture happily expreſſes it, with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. It acts in ſuch a manner as is adapted to the powers of a rational being, and to the liberty of a free agent. When ſuch gracious aids are offered to us, when the Spirit of God ſtrives in order to reclaim and inform us, it muſt be a high aggravation of our wickedneſs to reſiſt his operations,

and by our hardneſs and impenitence of heart, to treaſure up wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. What more could the good huſbandman have done to his vineyard than he has done? He calls upon you to repentance by the voice of nature; he calls you by the voice of reaſon; he calls you by the voice of Providence; he calls you by the voice which ſpake from heaven: he ſends down his Holy Spirit to ſecond theſe Divine calls, to help your infirmities, to enlighten your darkneſs, to ſtrengthen your feeble powers, and to work in you both to will and to do that which is his good pleaſure. Not only does he prepare the crown of glory, but he alſo aſſiſts you to fight the good fight, and to finiſh your courſe, that you may obtain that crown. Not only does he open the heavens to receive you, but he alſo ſtretches out his hands to conduct you thither. And if, after all, you reſiſt his Holy Spirit; if you counterwork his ſaving plan; if you defeat the efforts of mercy, the labors of heaven uſed for your recovery, your guilt is upon your own head, your ruin is owing to yourſelves, with your own hand you puſh yourſelves over the brink into the pit of utter perdition.

In the *fourth* place, as an inducement to repentance, conſider the croſs of Chriſt, who ſuffered the puniſhment due to our ſins. How great muſt be the evil of ſin, and how ſtrong the obligation for us to repent of our ſins, when ſuch a ſacrifice was required in order to expiate our guilt, and atone the wrath of Heaven. Burnt-offerings, thouſands of rams, and ten thouſands of rivers of oil, the firſt-born of

ſered up for the tranſgreſſion, the fruit of the body for the ſin of the ſoul, could not ſuffice. The Lamb of God could alone take away the ſin of the world. Look then on him whom thou haſt pierced, and mourn. Every groan that he utters, every tear that he ſheds, every drop of blood that he pours, calls thee to repentance. View him ſtretched out on the croſs, groaning under the pains of death, inclining his bleſſed head, and addreſſing his laſt words to you, "Sinners, behold your Saviour! behold him "who was perſecuted by Satan and by wicked men; "behold him who was forſaken by God; behold "this head which was crowned with thorns; be- "hold theſe hands which were nailed to the tree; be- "hold this ſide which was wounded with the ſpear; "behold the blood that flows from every part; ſin- "ner, it was ſhed for you!" Canſt thou, O man! behold that ſcene without emotion? Canſt thou continue impenitent in the practice of thoſe ſins, which brought thy Saviour to that painful and ignominous death?

Laſtly, It is another motive to repentance, that God "has appointed a day in the which he will judge the "world," as is mentioned in the verſe following the text. That the ſoul of man ſurvives the body, that there is a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments beyond the grave, has been the general belief among all nations. Teſtimonies of this truth every where abound. Whether we turn to the eaſt or to the weſt; whether we conſult the hiſtory of ancient or of modern times; whether we liſten to the accounts of the old world or of the new, we are preſented with proofs and evidences of this important doctrine. How this

opinion came to be ſo general, as to form an article in the popular creed of all nations, is a queſtion of ſome difficulty. To thoſe who have no guide but the light of nature, and who have no ſupernatural aids to aſſiſt the efforts of their own underſtanding, the arguments on both ſides ſeem to be ſo equally balanced, that, upon principles of reaſoning, it is almoſt impoſſible to come to any determination.

But, in all inquiries concerning human nature, we ought to attend to the heart more than to the underſtanding. Man is oftener guided by ſentiment and feeling, than by abſtract reaſoning. Almighty God hath endowed us with a ſenſe of moral good and evil. He hath placed within us a principle of conſcience, which paſſeth judgment upon human actions, approving the good, and condemning the bad. This tells us, that in the Divine adminiſtration it ought to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. In confirmation of this, we ſee that by the original appointment of Heaven, and in the daily courſe of Providence, there is no peace to the wicked, and that they have great peace who love the laws of the Lord. At the ſame time, we frequently obſerve in the courſe of human affairs, that the lot of the wicked falls to the righteous. We ſee many inſtances in life of good men depreſſed, and of bad men exalted; of vice holding a ſceptre, and virtue pining in chains. How often have we ſeen the beſt of men reduced to eat the bread of ſorrow, and drink the waters of affliction, whilſt the worthleſs and the infamous have rioted in the abundance of life, and enjoyed what their hearts could wiſh. When ſuch ſcenes are preſented to our eyes, our heart riſes with-

in us. Shall it always continue thus, we ſay within ourſelves, ſhall it always continue thus in a world that is governed by God? Shall oppreſſed righteouſneſs never be taken into the protection of Providence, and triumphant wickedneſs never fall under his cenſure? Shall the cry of the innocent, of the oppreſſed, and of the perſecuted, never reach the throne of juſtice? Are the wrongs and grievances of the good and the righteous, the wrongs and grievances which they ſuffered in the cauſe of goodneſs and of righteouſneſs, never to be redreſſed? Is wickedneſs finally to triumph over oppreſſed virtue; to triumph over the laws of nature; to triumph over the providence of Heaven? Will the time never come when the Almighty ſhall riſe from his throne to adjuſt and rectify the affairs of the moral world? If not in this, certainly in ſome future ſtate, he will aſſume the part of a Judge, to reward the juſt, and to take vengeance upon the wicked.

All this has at laſt been fully revealed. It was reſerved to the divine Prophet who came from the boſom of the Father, to bring life and immortality to light by his Goſpel. He taught that God had appointed a day in which he was to judge the world; that the dead were to be raiſed, and all that ever lived upon the earth to appear at his tribunal. Of this doctrine he gave aſſurance unto all men by his own reſurrection from the dead; and as ſurely as he aroſe, ſhall we at the time appointed ariſe. When the myſtery of God is finiſhed, the laſt trumpet will ſound. The voice of the Son of God will pierce the caverns of the tomb, will be heard over the kingdoms of the dead, will reanimate the aſhes of thouſands of gene-

nations, and ſift an aſſembled world at the ſeat of judgment. By the unalterable appointment of Heaven, every thing has its period. The cedar of Lebanon fades away like the leaf upon its top. Lebanon itſelf decays in the courſe of years. States and empires have their day, like mortal man. Limits are ſet to time, and the world has its laſt hour. A few generations more having paſſed away, the day comes which God hath appointed to judge the world; the great day for which all other days have revolved. When this period approaches, heaven opens wide its everlaſting doors, and behold the Judge comes forth! he comes in the glory of his Father; in the effulgence of unveiled Divinity he comes, attended with all the hoſt of heaven! Before him the harbinger of his appearance, the deſtroying angel of nature deſcends, cloathed with a cloud, having his face like the ſun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He ſets his right foot upon the ſea, and his left foot upon the earth; he lifts up his hand to heaven, and ſwears "by him that liveth for ever and ever, that "time ſhall be no more!" As the doom of nature is denounced, the thunders of heaven for the laſt time utter their voices; the laws of nature are diſſolved; the ſtars fall from the firmament; the moon is turned into blood; and that ſun, whoſe beams you now behold, ſinks in the darkneſs of eternal night; the earth hears its laſt ſentence, and ſhakes to the centre; the four corners of the world hear it; all that are alive hear it; all the dead hear it, and live; from the preſence of their Creator, the heavens depart like a ſcroll rolling itſelf together; the earth vaniſhes, and there is no place found for it; every mountain and ev-

ery iſland is fled; creation fades away to give place to uncreated glory; the great tribunal is erected; the books are opened; the Judge deſcends; the world is aſſembled; the ſentence is pronounced; the ſentence is executed: down to the priſon of darkneſs and deſpair, the habitation of unquenchable and everlaſting fire, the wicked are driven, where, bound in chains, they feel the torment of the worm that never dies, and ſuffer in the flames of the lake whoſe ſmoke aſcendeth up for ever and ever; whilſt enthroned in glory above, and adorned with the beauties of immortality, the righteous aſcend with their Lord, and, approaching to the fountain of life, partake of thoſe pleaſures at the right hand of God, which ſhall occupy and animate the praiſes of eternity.

Let me now aſk you, my brethren, Do you believe what you have now heard? Do you believe that there is a judgment to come, and that each of you ſhall bear a part in that tremendous ſcene? I appeal to a witneſs that cannot lie. I appeal to your own conduct. Do you live and act in ſuch a manner as becomes thoſe who have one day to anſwer for their lives and their actions? Is your converſation in Heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour and the Judge? Are your loins girt about, your lamps burning, and you yourſelves like unto men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Were the general judgment now to begin, were theſe heavens to open, and the ſign of the Son of Man to appear over head, could you face his tribunal? Could you lift up your heads with confidence and joy amidſt the ruins of nature, and the craſh of a diſſolving world? If not, I call upon you to repent, and to reform your

lives. You are ſtill under the adminiſtration of grace, and have the hope of glory ſet before you. Heaven and immortality are in your offer. God graciouſly calls you to repentance and newneſs of life. The Spirit helps your infirmities, and ſtrives to conquer the ſtubbornneſs of your ſpirits. But he will not always thus wait to be gracious. Your day of grace does not laſt for ever. If mercy reclaims you not, you are delivered over to the hands of juſtice. If you reject the golden ſceptre when it is held out to you, a rod of iron ſucceeds to deſtroy the children of diſobedience. Repent you muſt, in one form or other. If your ſins affect you not with ſorrow and contrition here, they will fill you with unavailable remorſe and deſpair hereafter. You muſt either be affected with the kindly emotions of that repentance which is unto life, or be tormented with the ſtings of the worm that never dies.

Knowing theſe terrors, we endeavour to perſuade men. Happy for men, if they would endeavour to be perſuaded! If theſe things, my brethren, which you have been now hearing, be true; if it be true that we ſhall be raiſed up at the laſt day; that the day of judgment ſhall as ſurely ariſe as this morning aroſe, in obedience to laws which can no more fail to bring it forth than the ſun could this morning refuſe to riſe at the command of its Creator; if it be true that all of us who are here aſſembled ſhall be aſſembled again around the judgment ſeat of God; if it be true that this is our only ſtate of probation, and that life and death are now in our choice, that heaven and hell are now ſet before us; if theſe things be true, (and true they are, otherwiſe this

book is a collection of fables,) if these things be true, then, O my brethren, what manner of persons ought we to be!—then, O my God, what manner of persons ought we to be! ———

SERMON XVIII.

2 Cor. vi. 2.

—Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of ſalvation.

THERE is not a man upon the earth but who has ſome ſenſe of religion upon his mind, and intends one day or another to work out his ſalvation. When we look into the world, we find that all men are juſt about to reform. However looſe in their principles, however profligate in their lives, they ſeriouſly purpoſe to amend their conduct, and the ſinner of today reſolves to be a ſaint tomorrow. Seeing then that all men are ſo favourably diſpoſed towards religion; ſeeing that all men are in earneſt one day to repent; how does it come to paſs that ſo many men never repent; that ſuch multitudes live and die in their ſins? It is becauſe they delay their repentance; it is becauſe they put off the day of ſalvation; becauſe they begin not a courſe of reformation, but are only *about* to reform. This infatuation is not confined to the inexperience of our early years, it extends through every period of life. In this the hoary head is no wiſer than the youth of yeſterday; and the ſame lying ſpirit that deceived us at twenty, is believed at threeſcore and ten. In this, experience does not make us wiſe, and when we buy inſtruction it avails us not. The fool, who,

wanting to croſs the river, lay down on its bank till the waters all ran by, is but a juſt emblem of that man who delays his repentance from time to time, who is always purpoſing but never performing, and who, neither warned by the paſt, nor alarmed for the future, purpoſes on to the laſt, and dies the ſame. Such is the life which numbers of men lead in the world, ſpending the prime and vigour of their life in vain purſuits; letting all their religion evaporate in empty reſolutions, till, in an hour in which they are not aware, the warning is given. At midnight is the cry made, and when they ſeek to enter in with the bridegroom, the door is ſhut!

That you may underſtand the expreſſions made uſe of in the text, I muſt recall to your remembrance, that in the language of Scripture, the period of our probation is called a time, a ſeaſon, or a day. There is an accepted time, there is a ſeaſon of merciful viſitation, there is a day of grace, which, if we let ſlip, the night cometh, in which no man can work, in which we ſhall grope for the wall like the blind, in which we ſhall ſtumble at noon-day as in the night, and be in deſolate places as dead men. This does not ariſe from a defect of mercy in God, from a defect of merit in Chriſt, or from a defect of grace in the Holy Spirit; it ariſes from ourſelves and from the nature of things. Almighty God hath appointed this life to be our ſtate of probation. He hath ſet apart a time to fix the character for eternity. When, therefore, by repeated acts and by long habits, this everlaſting character is fixed, no alteration can ſucceed. To give an inſtance that may have occurred to the obſervation of you all; you have ſeen, or you

have heard of, criminals who have been trained up from their youth in the practice of vice, who have advanced from leſs to greater crimes, who have been puniſhed according to law, who have been impriſoned, who have been baniſhed, who have returned from baniſhment, and for greater crimes have been condemned to die, who from ſome artifice or incident have eſcaped in the critical moment, and who, inſtead of being reformed by all theſe puniſhments, have fallen into the ſame crimes again, and even grown bolder in wickedneſs. There have indeed been inſtances of great ſinners who have turned penitents, and been good Chriſtians; but it is much to be queſtioned if there be any ſuch inſtance among thoſe who have been *long* ſinners, who have committed iniquity, not by fits and ſtarts, but upon a fixed and determined plan, who have ſpent in the ſervice of ſin all the fire of youth and coolneſs of age.

Having explained to you the meaning of the phraſe uſed in the text, before proceeding further, take next a view of life, and you will ſee, that a great part of men let ſlip the accepted time and day of ſalvation, till it be too late. It is the happineſs of moſt men in countries where the Chriſtian religion is profeſſed, to receive a good education, and to be trained up from their youth in the principles of religion, and in the practice of virtue. But when this period of diſcipline is over, when a man ſets out in life, and becomes his own maſter, he frequently becomes a different perſon in that different ſtate, and looks upon the good habits of his youth as ſome of thoſe childiſh things which he ought now to put away. If his edu-

cation has been ſevere and rigorous; if his parents reſtrained in him that gaity of heart and flow of the ſpirits which is the portion of youth; if he pined in his cloſet, whilſt his equals in age frequented thoſe entertainments which can be enjoyed with innocence, he then generally goes to the other extreme, and plunges with a precipitant ſtep into all the follies and vices of the age. The priſoner having got looſe, grows wild and extravagant. Being formerly ſhut up, he now wants to know the world; and, in order to this, ventures on forbidden paths, reſigns the reins of conduct to inclination, and gives a looſe to all his deſires. Having found his former principles to be inconſiſtent with the enjoyment of life, he confounds his early prejudices with true piety; for which cauſe he throws off religion altogether; he becomes a patron and defender of vice; he laughs at every thing that is ſerious; and perhaps out of contempt to this day, in which we aſſemble together to worſhip the God of our fathers; out of contempt to the ſacred rites of his country, which all wiſe heathens have revered; out of contempt to the venerable inſtitutions of our holy religion, ſpends this day in diſſipation and profaneneſs, and open impiety.

But, not to draw the character with ſuch black ſtains, let us ſuppoſe men at that period paſſing their days in folly rather than in vice, at the head of every idle ſcheme, firſt in every faſhionable amuſement, and as the Scripture happily expreſſeth it, "walking "in a vain ſhow." Behold them making amuſement one of the cares of life; ſpending thoſe precious hours, which no power can ever recall, which no future labour can ever compenſate, ſpending thoſe

precious hours in vanity and folly, whilſt all along they forget the buſineſs of their ſalvation, and are no more affected with the proſpect of a world to come, than with a tale that is told. But whilſt thus they dance round in a circle of folly; whilſt they ſolace themſelves with the proſpect of pleaſures riſing upon pleaſures, never to have an end, and ſay in ſecret to their ſouls, "Tomorrow ſhall be as this day, and "much more abundant;" whilſt, like the fooliſh virgins, they ſlumber and ſleep in the arms of this Delilah, at midnight is the cry made, O man, thy hour is come! And the trembling ſoul takes its departure unawares and unprepared to God the Judge of all!

To guard you againſt the fatal error which has undone its thouſands, allow me to recommend to your practice the neceſſity of inſtant repentance and reformation. In the *firſt* place, No time is ſo proper as the preſent; *ſecondly*, If you delay, your reformation will be difficult; *thirdly*, If you delay long, it may become altogether impoſſible.

In the *firſt* place then, There is no time ſo proper as the preſent.

The prodigal ſon exhibits to us a ſcene which we often ſee realized in life. A young man, who had been educated in the paths of virtue, declining from theſe paths, and going aſtray into forbidden ground, from the fond expectation of meeting with ſome ſtrange, vaſt, unknown happineſs in the gratification of ſenſual deſire. In the courſe of this unhallowed pilgrimage, he gives looſe reins to his mind, he indulges every wandering inclination, he denies himſelf nothing that his heart wiſhes for. At laſt he comes

to himſelf, he ſees the folly of his ways, he repents, he reſolves, he amends. Such a change of life we can eaſily conceive. In his former ſituation, he knew not what he did, he was tranſported by paſſion, he went headlong down the torrent. But when once he began to reflect, he found that that was the critical moment of life, which, if he had neglected, his return would have been more difficult. In his former ſituation, he went forward in the path which ſeemed right in his own eyes, without looking back. He did not act againſt the admonitions of conſcience, he did not think at all. But if, after his eyes were opened to diſcern the ſtate of wretchedneſs and guilt into which he had fallen; if, after this, he had returned to folly again, it would have been much more difficult to reſtore him by repentance. Let this then be your conduct; whenever you come to the knowledge of your ſins, whenever you perceive any thing amiſs in your lives, ſeize the favourable moment, as the proper time to reform.

What is it, I beſeech you, that you do by delaying? You allow corruption time to ſtrengthen and fortify itſelf; you give temptation double force, by yielding to it, not from ſurpriſe, but with deliberate conſent; you weaken the power of conſcience, that check which God appointed to you in your evil courſes; and, with your own hand, you throw obſtacles in the way of your converſion. You now ſee you are ſinful and undone; you now reſolve to repent and amend; you are now ſetting out in the path which leadeth to life; you are not far from the kingdom of God. But if you reſolve and perform not; if, when you are once engaged, you draw back; you

then fly off from the path of life to the way of deſtruction; you throw yourſelf farther from the kingdom of God than if you had never ſet out. At once, then, at once make your eſcape from the allurements of ſin; break the chains by which you are held; cut off all the avenues and approaches to the ſin that beſets you; give no time to the enemies of your ſoul to collect their ſtrength; by faith and repentance now enter on the way that opens into the heavens; when you ſay, with ſincere purpoſe of heart, "I will "ariſe and go to my Father," in that moment ariſe and go to thy Father; *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of ſalvation.

In the *ſecond* place, By delaying, your converſion will become extremely difficult.

Thou ſayeſt, O man! that thou wilt repent in ſome future period of time; but thou knoweſt not the danger of ſuch a reſolution. It is amazing to think with what eaſe we can impoſe upon ourſelves. In ſpite of all his boaſted wiſdom, man is more ſimple than the beaſt of the field. Do you conſider, my friends, that delaying from day to day, and from year to year, that poſtponing the work of your ſalvation to ſome future period of time, is little better than a fixed determination that you will never begin it at all? Do you reflect, that the time to come, if it ever comes, will be the ſame to you *then*, that the preſent time is to you *now*? There will occur the ſame difficulties to deter you, the ſame pleaſures to allure you, the ſame dangers to terrify you. Objects will then be as preſent, and ſtrike the ſenſes as ſtrongly, as ever; and the time of reformation will ſtill be tomorrow. Nay, it will then be more diffi-

ſtill to be ſaved than it is now. You will have more ſins to repent of; more bad habits to ſubdue; a more corrupted nature to put off. It is a remarkable fact, and deſerves your moſt ſerious attention, that, among all the converſions recorded in Scripture, there is not one of a ſinner who delayed his repentance. Among all the returning penitents there mentioned, there is not one in the ſituation of a Chriſtian, who daily hears the Goſpel without its having any effect upon his life. Zaccheus, upon hearing Jeſus Chriſt proclaim the glad tidings of ſalvation, yielded to the influences of that grace to which he had hitherto been a ſtranger, and ſurrendered himſelf to a call which had never been made before. The apoſtles, in the courſe of their miniſtry, converted Jews and Gentiles. They converted the Jews, by propoſing to them an idea, which was new to them, the Lord of glory, whom they with wicked hands had crucified and ſlain. They converted the Gentiles, by working miracles in proof of their divine commiſſion, and by preaching the doctrines of Salvation to them, which they had never heard before.

But what new methods can we attempt with *you?* Is there any motive to repentance which hath not already been urged upon you? Is there one avenue to the heart which has not already been tried, and which has not already been tried in vain? Shall we addreſs ourſelves to your conſcience, to give you the alarm? But alas! you have often heard its voice, you have often diſregarded its voice, and by efforts too ſucceſsful, have lulled it into a profound ſleep. Shall we addreſs ourſelves to your hopes, by deſcribing to you the joys of heaven, the rivers of pleaſures

which are at God's right hand, the happineſs of the bleſſed, the triumphs of eternity? All theſe have been already preſented to your eyes, and to all theſe you have preferred the enjoyments of an hour. You have ſold your birth-right to immortality for a ſordid gratification, and you now only mind earthly things. Shall we endeavour to alarm your fears, by ſetting before you the horrors of hell, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord and the glory of his power? Theſe have been traced out to you an hundred times, and you have learned the fatal art of freeing yourſelves from the fears of them. Shall we implore you by the grace of the Goſpel, and by the tender mercies of the God of Peace? But alas! you have undervalued his mercy, you have turned his grace into wantonneſs. Shall we ſet before you the image of a Saviour dying on the croſs for the redemption of the world? But alas! a crucified Redeemer hath been often preached to you, the memorial of his ſacrifice hath been renewed in your ſight, and after all you have counted his blood as a common thing, you have looked upon the Son of God ſuffering on the croſs with as much unconcern as the Jews of old, when they cried out, "Away "with him, away with him!"

In the *third* place, By long delaying, your converſion may become altogether impoſſible.

Habit, ſays the proverb, is a ſecond nature; and indeed it is ſtronger than the firſt. At firſt, we eaſily take the bend, and are moulded by the hands of the maſter; but this nature of our own making is proof againſt alteration. The Ethiopian may as ſoon

change his ſkin, and the leopard his ſpots; the tormented in hell may as ſoon reviſit the earth; as thoſe who have been long accuſtomed to do evil, may learn to do well. Such is the wiſe appointment of Heaven to deter ſinners from delaying their repentance. When the evil principle hath corrupted the whole capacity of the mind; when ſin, by its frequency and its duration, is woven into the very eſſence of the ſoul, and is become part of ourſelves; when the ſenſe of moral good and evil is almoſt totally extinct; when conſcience is ſeared as with a hot iron; when the heart is ſo hard that the arrows of the Almighty cannot pierce it; and when, by a long courſe of crimes, we have become what the Scripture moſt emphatically calls, "veſſels of wrath fitted for "deſtruction;"—then we have filled up the meaſure of our ſins; then Almighty God ſwears in his wrath that we ſhall not enter into his reſt; then there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful looking for wrath, and indignation which ſhall devour the adverſary. Almighty God, weary of bearing with the ſins of men, delivers them over to a reprobate mind, when, like Pharaoh, they ſurvive only as monuments of wrath; when, like Eſau, they cannot find a place for repentance, although they ſeek it carefully with tears; when, like the fooliſh virgins, they come knocking, but the door of mercy is for ever ſhut.

Further, Let me remind you, my brethren, that if you repent not now, perhaps you will not have another opportunity. You ſay you will repent in ſome future period of time; but are you ſure of arriving at that period of time? Have you one hour

in your hand? Have you one minute at your diſpoſal? Boaſt not thyſelf of tomorrow. Thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth. Before tomorrow, multitudes ſhall be in another world. Art thou ſure that thou art not of the number? Man knoweth not his time. As the fiſhes that are taken in an evil net, as the birds that are caught in the ſnare, ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil hour. Can you recall to mind none of your companions, none of the partners of your follies and your ſins, cut off in an unconverted ſtate, cut off perhaps in the midſt of an unfiniſhed debauch, and hurried, with all their tranſgreſſions on their head, to give in their account to God the Judge of all? Could I ſhow you the ſtate which they are now in; could an angel from heaven unbar the gates of the everlaſting priſon; could you diſcern the late companions of your wanton hours overwhelmed with torment and deſpair; could you hear the cry of their torment which aſcendeth up for ever and ever; could you hear them upbraiding you as the partners of their crimes, and accuſing you as in ſome meaſure the cauſe of their damnation!—Great God! how would your hair ſtand on end! how would your heart die within you! how would conſcience fix all its ſtings, and remorſe, awaking a new hell within you, torment you before the time! Had a like untimely fate ſnatched *you* away *then*, where had you been *now?* And is this the improvement which you make of that longer day of grace with which Heaven has been pleaſed to favour you? Is this the return you make to the Divine goodneſs for prolonging your lives, and indulging you with a longer day of repentance? Have you in good earneſt

determined within yourſelf that you will weary out the long-ſuffering of God, and force deſtruction from his reluctant hand?

I beſeech, I implore you, my brethren, in the bonds of friendſhip, and in the bowels of the Lord; by the tender mercies of the God of Peace; by the dying love of a crucified Redeemer; by the precious promiſes and awful threatenings of the Goſpel; by all your hopes of heaven and fears of hell; by the worth of your immortal ſouls, and by all that is dear to men; I conjure you to accept of the offers of mercy, and fly from the wrath to come. "Behold "now is the accepted time, behold now is the day "of ſalvation." All the treaſures of heaven are now opening to you; the blood of Chriſt is now ſpeaking for the remiſſion of your ſins; the church on earth ſtretches out its arms to receive you; the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect are eager to enroll you amongſt the number of the bleſſed; the angels and archangels are waiting to break out into new alleluiahs of joy on your return; the whole Trinity is now employed in your behalf; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, at this inſtant call upon you, weary and heavy laden, to come unto them that ye may have reſt unto your ſouls!

SERMON XIX.

LUKE xv. 18.

I will ariſe and go to my Father.

THE parable of the prodigal ſon is one of the moſt beautiful and affecting pieces of compoſition which is any where to be found. The occaſion on which it was ſpoken, and the perſons to whom it was addreſſed, are well known to you. Dropping therefore what was peculiar at the firſt narration, I ſhall conſider it as repreſenting in general the return of ſinners to God by true repentance.

Such a return is not a ſingle act in the Chriſtian life; it is the habitual duty of every man who is ſubject to infirmities and defects. For ſuch is the weakneſs of human nature in this imperfect ſtate, ſuch is the ſtrength of temptation in this evil world, that frail man is often led aſtray before he is aware. Alas! in our beſt eſtate we are but returning penitents; and to the laſt hour of this mortal life we ſtand in need of amendment.

We may obſerve the following ſteps in the return of the prodigal to his father's houſe; *firſt*, His reſtoration to a better mind, by means of conſideration. "When "he came to himſelf, he ſaid, How many hired ſer-"vants of my father's have bread enough, and to ſpare!" *Second*, Ingenuous ſorrow for ſin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. "Father, "I have ſinned againſt Heaven and before thee."

Third, A reſolution to return to a ſenſe of duty. "I will ariſe and go to my father." And, *fourth*, His immediate performance of that reſolution. "And he aroſe and came to his father."

Firſt, His reſtoration to a better mind by means of conſideration. "He came to himſelf."

With great propriety is this expreſſion uſed; for a wicked man is *beſide himſelf*. Madneſs, ſaith Solomon, is in the heart of the ſinner. As madneſs is a diſeaſe of the rational powers, ſo is vice of the moral. Sin, in like manner, unhinges the whole frame of the moral being, tinges with its baleful colours every ſentiment of the heart, and preſents to view a ſpectacle more melancholy ſtill, a being, made after the image of God, ſinking that image into the reſemblance of a brute, or the character of a fiend. Mad, however, as ſuch perſons are, they are not always ſo. Sin cannot always keep its ground. The evil principle has its hour of weakneſs and decline. There is no man uniformly wicked. The exertion is too ſtrong to laſt for ever. Nature does not afford ſtrength and ſpirits ſufficient to keep a man always in energy. The moſt abandoned have fits and ſtarts of ſoberneſs and recollection. There are lucid intervals in the life of every perſon. At ſuch a time is the criſis of a man's character. At ſuch a time the prodigal ſon came to his right mind. At once the ſpell was broken and the enchantment diſſolved. He is amazed, he is confounded to find himſelf degraded from the rational character; caſt down to the herd of inferior animals; making one at the feaſt where the vileſt of brutes were his aſſociates and companions. Then the falſe colours with which fancy had

gilded his life, vaniſh away. The flattering ideas which imagination and paſſion preſented to his mind, diſappear in a moment. Diſenchanted from the deluſions of the great deceiver, what he eſteemed to be the garden of Eden, he finds to be a deſolate wilderneſs. "Then he came to himſelf."

You know that when a man recovers from a fit of lunacy, and is reſtored to his reaſon, the mind annihilates the lurid interval, forgets the events of ſuch a ſtate like a dream, and reſumes the train of ideas it had purſued in its ſound ſtate. Thus, the penitent in the parable, awaking as from a dream, recovering as from a delirium, tranſports himſelf into the time paſt, his former life recurs to his mind, his father's houſe riſes to view, he recalls the firſt of his days before he went aſtray. Happy days of early innocence and early piety, before remorſe had embittered his hours, or vice corrupted his heart! Happy days! when the morning aroſe in peace, and the evening went down in innocence; when no action of the paſt day diſturbed his ſlumbers by night; when no reflection on the riots of the night threw a cloud over the ſucceeding day; when he was at peace with his own heart; when conſcience was on his ſide; when reflection was a friend; when memory preſented only welcome images to the mind; when, under the wings of paternal care, he was bleſſed in his going out and coming in; when his father's eye met his with approbation and delight.

Having viewed the picture, he compares it with his preſent ſituation. Sad contraſt! By his own folly, a vagabond in a foreign land; baniſhed from all that he valued and held dear; cut off from the joys of

his better days; languiſhing out life under the moſt abject form of miſery; pining under poverty; ſunk into ſervitude; feeding ſwine, and himſelf deſiring to partake with them in their huſks; miſerable without, but more miſerable within; a ſpirit wounded by remorſe; a heart torn by reflection on itſelf, an accuſing conſcience, which told him that he merited his fate; and which held up to him his paſt life in its blackeſt colours of folly and guilt. Aſtoniſhed at himſelf, ſtartled at his own image, which, in its true colours, he had never ſeen before, he was aſhamed of his conduct, and came to a better mind. Such were the effects of conſideration, and ſuch will ever be the effects of conſideration to thoſe who duly exerciſe it. Why does the ſinner go forward in the error of his ways? Becauſe he does not conſider. "Hear, O heavens; give ear, O earth: the "ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's "crib; but my people do not conſider." Conſider your ways, is the voice which God addreſſes to mankind in every age; and unleſs you conſider, the calls of the goſpel and the offers of grace are made to no purpoſe. The world which is to come has no exiſtence to you but what you give it yourſelves; the eternity that is before you, the happineſs of heaven and the pains of hell, are no more than dreams, unleſs you realize them to yourſelves, unleſs you give them their full force, by bringing them home to the heart. When a man reviews the error of his ways, nothing is wanting to a further reformation but reflection and thought: Think, and the work is done. "I have conſidered my ways," ſaith the Pſalmiſt: What was the conſequence? "I turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies."

The *ſecond* ſtep in the return of the prodigal, is ingenuous ſorrow for ſin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. "Father, I have ſinned againſt "Heaven and before thee."

We are formed by the Author of our being to feel contrition for the offences we commit. This pungent ſenſe of infirmities, this penitential ſorrow for errors and defects, is a beauty in the nature of man. It is an indication that the ſenſe of excellence exiſts in its full vigour, and the mark of a nature that is not only improvable, but that alſo is making improvements. When a man ſeriouſly conſiders that the tenor of his life has been irregular and diſorderly; that much of his time has been miſemployed, and great part of it ſpent altogether in vain; that he has walked in a vain ſhow, unprofitable to himſelf or others, an idler upon the earth, a cumberer of the ground; that by his negligence and perverſion of his powers he has been loſt to the world which is to come, has marred the beauty of his immortal ſpirit, and ſtopt ſhort in the race which conducts to glory, honor, and immortality; when he further conſiders that his offences have extended to his fellowmen, that by his conduct he has been the cauſe of miſery to others, has diſturbed the peace of ſociety, done an injury to the innocent, ſuch reflections in a heart that is not altogether callous, will awaken contrition and ſorrow.

This penitential ſorrow will be increaſed when he conſiders againſt whom he has offended; that he has ſinned againſt infinite goodneſs and ſaving mercy and tender love; that he has reſiſted the efforts of that arm that was lifted up to ſave him; that he has

rebelled againſt the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed him. This is one of the characteriſtics of true repentance. The penitent does not mourn for his ſins as being ruinous to himſelf, ſo much as for their being offenſive to God. The returning prodigal, in the addreſs he makes to his Father, dwells not upon the miſery he had brought upon himſelf, upon the ruin to his character, his fortune and his expectations in life. "I have ſinned againſt "Heaven and in thy ſight." What grieves me moſt is, that I have offended thee; that I have ſinned againſt goodneſs unſpeakable; againſt that goodneſs to which I am indebted for the care of my infant years; againſt that goodneſs to which I owe my preſervation; againſt him who viſited me while I was flying from his preſence; who ſupported my powers while they were employed againſt him. It is my Benefactor whom I have offended; it is my beſt Friend that I have injured; it is my Father himſelf againſt whom I have riſen in arms.

This ſorrow for ſin is accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. To wicked men labouring under the agonies of a guilty mind, the Deity appears an object of terror. They figure to themſelves an angry tyrant, with his thunder in his hand delighting to puniſh and deſtroy. Like Adam when he had ſinned, they are afraid, and flee from the preſence of the Lord. But from the mind of the penitent theſe terrors vaniſh, and God appears, not as a cruel and malignant power, but as the beſt of beings, the Father of mercies and the Friend of men, as a God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf. Encouraged by theſe declarations, the penitent truſts to the

Divine goodneſs, and flies for refuge to the hope ſet before him. It is the wicked man only that deſpairs. Horrors of conſcience and forebodings of wrath affright and overwhelm the ſons of reprobation. Such horrors felt Cain and Judas Iſcariot. But the penitent never deſpairs. He ſinks indeed in his own eyes, and throws himſelf proſtrate on the ground, but ſtill throws himſelf at the footſtool of mercy, not without the faith and the hope that he will be taken into favour. The language of his ſoul is, "Though "I am caſt out of thy ſight, yet will I look again to "thy holy temple. I will ariſe and go to my Father, "for though I have offended him, he is a Father ſtill. "He now ſits upon a throne of mercy, and holds a "ſceptre of grace. At thy tribunal former offenders "have been forgiven, and former ſinners have been "taken into favour. To thy ears the cry of the pen-"itent has never aſcended in vain. Thou art ever "nigh to all who call upon thee in ſincerity of heart. "When we tend to thee, at the firſt ſtep of our re-"turn, thou ſtretcheſt out thy hand to receive us." So different is that repentance which is unto life from the ſorrow of the world which worketh death. Different as the look of melancholy upon the face of the virtuous mourner, is from the unkindly glow which burns the cheek of ſhame: different as the tender tears which a good man ſheds for his friends, are from thoſe bitter drops which fall from the malefactor at the place of execution.

The *third* ſtep is a reſolution to return to a ſenſe of duty. "I will ariſe."

Without determined purpoſes of amendment, contrition is unavailing and ineffectual. The Deity is

not delighted with the ſufferings of man. Sorrow for ſin is ſo far pleaſing, as it ſoftens the heart, and makes it better. It is the reſolution of amendment, the purpoſes pointed to reformation, that make the broken heart and the contrite ſpirit an acceptable ſacrifice; ſuch is the nature of true repentance; it flows not ſo much from the ſenſe of danger as from the love of goodneſs.

In true repentance, there is not only a change of mind, but a change of life. When the day-ſpring from on high ariſes on him who is in darkneſs, when God ſays, Let there be light, the ſcales fall from his eyes, a new world breaks upon his ſight, futurity becomes preſent, and inviſible things are ſeen; then firſt he beholds the beauty which is in holineſs, and taſtes the joy which flows from returning virtue. In that happy hour he forms the pious purpoſe, and ſeals the ſacred vow to be holy for ever. Then he prefers the peace which flows from virtue, and the joy which ariſes from a good conſcience, to every conſideration. Then the ſervants of God appear to him the only happy men, and he would rather rank with the meaneſt of theſe, than enjoy the riches of many wicked. "Great God, withhold from me what thou pleaſeſt, "but give me to enjoy the approbation of my own "mind, and thy favour. I would rather be the hum-"bleſt of thy ſons than dwell in the tents of wicked-"neſs." None ſhall enter into the New Jeruſalem, and ſit down at the right hand of the Father, but they who prefer the teſtimony of a good conſcience, the ſmiles of Heaven, and the ſentence of the juſt, to all the treaſures of the world.

Had the penitent not been in earneſt, falſe ſhame

might have prevented or retarded his return. Conſcious of guilt, and covered with confuſion, how ſhall he appear before his friends and acquaintance? "I "know (might he have ſaid) the malice of an ill "judging and injurious world. The ſins which are "blotted out from the book of God's remembrance "are not forgotten by them. Let me fly rather to the "uttermoſt parts of the earth, retire to the wilder-"neſs untrodden by the foot of man, and hide me in "the ſhades which the beams of the ſun never pier-"ced, than be expoſed to the ſcorn and contumely "and reproach of all around me."

But the penitent was determined and immoveable.

* * * *The reſt of the MS. was not legible.*

SERMON XX.

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 12.

Now we have received, not the ſpirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God.

THERE are two characters which, in Sacred Scripture, are ſet in perpetual oppoſition, the man of the earth, and the citizen of heaven. The firſt character pertains to that claſs of men, who, whatever ſpeculative opinions they entertain, yet, in practice, conſider this life as their only ſtate of being. A perſon of this character centres all his regards in himſelf; confines his views entirely to this world, and, purſuing avarice, ambition, or ſenſual pleaſure, makes theſe the ſole objects of purſuit. Good diſpoſitions he may poſſeſs, but he exerciſes them only when they are ſubſervient to his purpoſes. Virtues alſo he may cultivate, not for their own ſake, but for the temporal advantages they bring along with them. The citizen of heaven moves in a nobler ſphere. He does not indeed affect the character of ſanctity, by neglecting his temporal concerns. He looks upon the maxim of David, as inſpired wiſdom, "If thou art wiſe, thou art wiſe for thyſelf." But although he has his temporal intereſt in his eye, he has a higher intereſt in his heart. What is neceſſary, what is uſeful, will often be a ſubject of attention; but what is generous, what is lovely, what is honorable, what is praiſe-worthy, become the chief

objects of purſuit. He cultivates good diſpoſitions from a ſenſe of their beauty, previous to his experience of their utility; he eſteems the poſſeſſion of virtue more than the earthly rewards it procures; he lives in a conſtant diſcharge of the duties of life in this ſtate, and with a well grounded faith, and an animating hope, looks forward to a better world, and a higher ſtate of being.

Theſe two characters, which divide all mankind, are always repreſented in Scripture as inconſiſtent and incompatible with each other. It is impoſſible, ſays our Lord, at one and the ſame time to ſerve God and to ſerve Mammon. If any man love the world, ſays the Apoſtle John, the love of the Father is not in him. The principles that actuate theſe characters are repreſented in the text as two ſpirits oppoſite to one another, the ſpirit of the world, and the ſpirit which is of God. The ſpirit of any thing is that vital principle which ſets it agoing; which keeps it in motion; which gives it its form and diſtinguiſhing qualities. The ſpirit of the world is that principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life, of the man of the earth. The ſpirit which is of God is that vital principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life, of the citizen of heaven. One of theſe ſpirits actuates all mankind. While therefore I repreſent the ſtriking lineaments in theſe oppoſite characters, take this along with you, that I am deſcribing a character which is your own: a character which either raiſes to eminence, or ſinks down to debaſement.

In the *firſt* place, then, The ſpirit of the world is

mean and grovelling; the ſpirit which is of God is noble and elevated. The man of the earth, making himſelf the object of all his actions, and having his own intereſt perpetually in view, conducts his life by maxims of utility alone. This being the point to which he conſtantly ſteers, this being the line from which he never deviates, he puts a value on every thing preciſely as it is calculated to accompliſh his purpoſes. Accordingly, to gain his end, he deſcends to the loweſt and the vileſt means; he gives up the manly, the ſpirited, and the honorable part of life; he makes a ſacrifice of fame, and character, and dignity, and turns himſelf into all the forms of meanneſs, and baſeneſs, and proſtration. The Prophet Iſaiah, with infinite ſpirit, derides the idols of the heathen world. "A man," ſaith he, "plant-
"eth a tree, and the rain doth nouriſh it; he hew-
"eth him down cedars, and taketh the cypreſs and
"the oak; and of the tree which he planted he ma-
"keth to himſelf a god. The carpenter ſtretcheth out
"his rule, he marketh it out with a line; he faſh-
"ioneth it with planes, and maketh it after the fig-
"ure of a man; and then he worſhippeth it as a god.
"Part thereof he burneth in the fire, with part there-
"of he maketh bread, and with the reſidue he ma-
"keth a god." Similar to this is the creation of theſe earthly gods. Read the pages of their hiſtory, and behold them riſing to divinity by compliance, by ſervility, by humiliating meanneſs, and the darkeſt debaſements. How diſhonorable often is that path which conducts to earthly grandeur; and how mean a creature frequently is he whom the world calls a great man! So low and grovelling is the ſpirit of the world.

It is a ſpirit of a different kind that animates the citizen of heaven. He is born from above; he derives his deſcent from the everlaſting Father, and he retains a conſcious ſenſe of his divine original. Hence, Chriſtians, in Scripture, are called "noble;" are called the "excellent ones of the earth." It is unworthy of their celeſtial deſcent, it is unbecoming their new nature, to ſtoop to the meanneſs of vice. The citizen of heaven ſcorns the vile arts, and the low cunning, employed by the man of the earth. He condeſcends indeed to every gentle office of kindneſs and humanity. But there is a difference between condeſcending, and deſcending from the dignity of character. From that he never deſcends. He himſelf ever feels, and he makes others feel too, that he walks in a path which leads to greatneſs, and ſupports a character which is forming for heaven. Such is the difference between the ſpirit of the world, and the ſpirit which is of God. Suppleneſs, ſervility, abject ſubmiſſion, diſgrace the one; dignity, elevation, independence, exalt the other. The one is a ſerpent, ſmooth, inſinuating, creeping on the ground, and licking the duſt: the other is an eagle, that towers aloft in the higher regions of the air, and moves rejoicing in his path through the heavens.

In the *ſecond* place, The ſpirit of the world is a ſpirit of falſehood, diſſimulation and hypocriſy; the ſpirit of God is a ſpirit of truth, ſincerity and openneſs. The life which the man of the earth leads is a ſcene of impoſture and deluſion. Show without ſubſtance; appearance without reality; profeſſions of friendſhip which ſignify nothing, and promiſes which are never meant to be performed, fill up a life

which is all outſide. With him the face is not the index of the mind, nor the tongue the interpreter of the heart. There is a lie in his right hand. He is perpetually acting a part, and under a maſk he goes about deceiving the world. He turns himſelf into a variety of ſhapes; he changes as circumſtances change; he goes through all the forms of diſſimulation, and puts off one diſguiſe to put on another. He does not heſitate to counterfeit religion when it ſerves a turn, and to act the ſaint in order to gain his ends. Hence the ſpirit of the world hath often paſſed for the ſpirit which is of God, and Satan under this diſguiſe hath been miſtaken for an angel of light. Such is the ſpirit of the world.

The ſpirit which is of God is a ſpirit of truth, ſincerity and openneſs. The citizen of heaven eſteems truth as ſacred, and holds ſincerity to be the firſt of the virtues. He has no ſecret doctrines to communicate. He needs no choſen confidents to whom he may impart his favourite notions; no private conventicles where he may diſſeminate his opinions. What he avows to God he avows to man. He expreſſeth with his tongue what he thinketh with his heart. He will not indeed improperly publiſh truths; he will not proſtitute what is pure and holy; he will not, as the Scripture ſays, throw pearls before ſwine; but neither will he on any occaſion, partake with ſwine in their huſks. He is what he appears to be. Arrayed in the ſimple majeſty of truth, he ſeeks no other covering. Supported by the conſciouſneſs of rectitude, he holds faſt his integrity as he would guard his life. Such is the difference between theſe characters. The man of the earth turns aſide to the

crooked paths and inſidious mazes of diſſimulation; the citizen of heaven moves along in the onward tract of integrity and honor. The ſpirit of the world ſeeks concealment and the darkneſs and the ſhade; the ſpirit which is of God loves the light, becomes the light, adorns the light.

Thirdly, The ſpirit of the world is a timid ſpirit; the ſpirit which is of God is a bold and manly ſpirit. Actuated by ſelfiſh principles, and purſuing his own intereſt, the man of the earth is afraid to offend. He accommodates himſelf to the manners that prevail, and courts the favour of the world by the moſt inſinuating of all kinds of flattery, by following its example. He is a mere creature of the times; a mirror to reflect every vice of the vicious, and every vanity of the vain. His ſole deſire is to pleaſe. If he ſpeak truths, they are pleaſing truths. He dares not riſk the diſapprobation of a fool, and would rather offend againſt the laws of Heaven than give offence to his neighbour. To ſinners he appears as a ſinner, to ſaints he appears as a ſaint. In the literal ſenſe he becomes all things to all men, without aſpiring to that faith which would ſet him above the world, or to that ſpirit which would enable him to aſſert the dignity of the rational character. He is timid becauſe he has reaſon to be ſo. Wickedneſs, condemned by its own vileneſs, is timorous, and forecaſteth grievous things. There is a dignity in virtue which keeps him at a diſtance; he feels how awful goodneſs is; and in the preſence of a virtuous man, he ſhrinks into his own inſignificance.

On the other hand, the righteous is bold as a lion. "I fear my God, and I have no other fear,"

is the language of his heart. With God for his protector, and with innocence for his ſhield, he walks through the world with an erect poſture, and with a face that looks upwards. He deſpiſes a fool, though he were poſſeſſed of all the gold of Ophir, and ſcorns a vile man, though a miniſter of ſtate. The voice of the world is to him as a ſounding braſs or tinkling cymbal. The applauſes or the cenſures of the high or the low affect him not. Like diſtant thunder, they vibrate on his ear, but come not to his heart. To him his own mind is the whole world. There ſits the judge of his actions, and he appeals to no other tribunal upon the earth. He poſſeſſes the ſpirit which reſts upon itſelf. He walks by his own light, he determines upon his own deeds. Supported by the conſciouſneſs of innocence, and acting with all the force of Providence on his ſide, he has nothing to fear; knows that he can no more be hurt by the rumours of the idle, impious, and hypocritical, than the heavens can be ſet on fire by the ſparkles that ariſe into the air, and that die in the moment they aſcend. Animated with this ſpirit, the feeble becomes ſtrong in the Lord. The Apoſtles who on former occaſions had been weak and timid, whom the voice of a woman frightened into apoſtaſy, who deſerted their Maſter in his deepeſt diſtreſs, and hid themſelves from the fury of the multitude; theſe Apoſtles no ſooner felt the impulſe of this Spirit, than they appeared openly in the midſt of Jeruſalem, publiſhed the reſurrection of Jeſus to thoſe prieſts and elders who had condemned him to death, and diſcovered a boldneſs and magnanimity, a ſpirit and intrepidity, which ſhook the councils of the Jewiſh na-

tion, and made the kings of the earth to tremble on their thrones.

In the *laſt* place, The ſpirit of the world is an intereſted ſpirit; the ſpirit which is of God is a generous ſpirit. The man of the earth has no feeling but for himſelf. His own intereſt is his only object; he never looſes ſight of this; this is his all; every line of his conduct centres in this point. He has a deſign in every thing he does. As the Prophet Malachi ſays, "He will not ſhut the doors for nought." He deliberates not whether an action will do good, but whether it will do good to him. That generoſity of ſentiment which expands the ſoul; that charming ſenſibility of heart which makes us glow for the good and weep for the woes of others; that Chriſtian charity which comprehends in its wide circle all our brethren of mankind; that diffuſive benevolence reduced to a principle of action which makes the human nature approach to the Divine, he conſiders as the dreams of a viſionary head, as the figments of a romantic mind that knows not the world.

But the ſpirit which is of God is as generous as the ſpirit of the world is ſordid. One of the chief duties in the ſpiritual life is to deny ſelf. Chriſtianity is founded upon the moſt aſtoniſhing inſtance of generoſity and love that ever was exhibited to the world; and they have no pretenſions to the Chriſtian character who feel not the truth of what their maſter ſaid, "That it is more bleſſed to give than to receive." This is not comprehended by worldly men, and the more worldly and wicked they are, the more it is incomprehenſible. "Does Job ſerve God for nought?" ſaid the firſt accuſer of the juſt. Yes,

thou accurſed ſpirit! he ſerves God for nought. Thy votaries ſerve thee for lucre and profit and filthy mammon; but the children of God ſerve him from reverence and love. Rewarded indeed they ſhall be in heaven, while thine are to be tormented, and by thyſelf, in hell; but they account that to be a ſufficient reward which they have even here in their own hearts, the conſciouſnefs and the applauſes of generoſity.

SERMON XXI.

LUKE xi. 13.

——How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!

IN the beginning of this chapter, our Lord preſcribed to his diſciples a pattern of prayer. He diſcovered the Deity to them under the tender name of a Father; and he taught them to approach the throne of Grace with the affection and the confidence of children. To encourage them ſtill more to practice this duty, he aſſures them of ſucceſs upon their perſeverance in devotion; and to impreſs his inſtructions in the ſtrongeſt manner upon their minds, he delivers a parable to them, which he concludes with theſe words: "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it "ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that "aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; "and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened. If a "ſon ſhall aſk bread of any of you that is a father, "will he give him a ſtone? or if he aſk a fiſh, will "he for a fiſh give him a ſerpent? or if he ſhall aſk "an egg, will he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then, "being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your "children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Fa"ther give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him?" As if he had ſaid, "I have told you that God is "your Father; that his ear is ever open to your

" cry, and that his hand is ever ſtretched out in " your behalf. You that are fathers can judge of " the paternal affection. If you ſee a child in diſ- " treſs, will your bowels of compaſſion be ſhut a- " gainſt him? When he utters the voice of ſorrow, " will you turn a deaf ear to his complaint? Will " you refuſe to ſtretch out the hand to ſave him " from the pit, and inſtead of relieving him, puſh " him down into deſtruction? There is no father ſo " barbarous, and no heart ſo cruel. If you, then, " evil and corrupted as you are; if, clothed as you " are with human frailties and infirmities, you know " how to give good gifts unto your children; if the " workings of nature, and the yearnings of paternal " affection, prompt you to perform good offices, how " much more will the infinite benevolence of the De- " ity prompt him to bleſs all his offspring, and open " his bountiful hand to the whole family of heaven " and earth! As the Moſt High God who inhabit- " eth eternity, excells his meaneſt creature, the be- " ing of a day, ſo far doth the infinite benignity and " everlaſting love of your Father in heaven exceed " the fondeſt affection of an earthly parent."

In further diſcourſing to you upon this ſubject, I ſhall explain what is meant by giving the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps theſe words may refer to the extraordinary effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles on the day of Pentecoſt, when they received the gift of tongues, and were endued with the power of working miracles. Though theſe words may include this meaning, yet they chiefly refer to the ordinary influence of the Divine Spirit, which extends to every

generation ; which is the principle of the ſpiritual life within us, and continues with the faithful in all ages. Reaſon and revelation concur in aſſuring us, that the great Creator hath never withdrawn himſelf from his works. Above us, around us, and within us, God is ſeen, God is felt. The vaſt univerſe is one great temple which he fills with his preſence. As he is ever preſent in the world, he is ever employed. The hand that at firſt ſtretched out the heavens, ſtill ſupports the pillars of the firmament. The breath which kindled the vital heat of nature, ſtill keeps the flame alive and glowing ; God ſtill acts through all his works, preſerving and upholding the whole ſyſtem of things, and carrying forward the deſigns of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs. His providence is a continued exertion of creating power. As he is employed in the material, he acts alſo upon the moral world. The Father of ſpirits communicates himſelf to holy men, enlightens their underſtandings with divine knowledge ; by ſecret ways, at once ſtrengthens and raviſhes the mind, and fills them with a conſcious ſenſe of his own preſence. Hence the wiſeſt among the heathens, guided only by the light of nature, acknowledged the neceſſity of ſupernatural aids, and taught that nothing great or good could be performed without the influence of a divine Spirit. But as this doctrine hath been by ſome denied altogether, and by others involved in myſticiſm and abſurdity, it will be proper to give you that juſt and rational account of it which the Scripture authoriſes.

There is hardly any one thing of which mankind may be made more ſenſible from their own experi-

ence, than the neceſſity of divine aids. For alas! the balance in human nature, between reaſon and appetite, between the powers of the mind, and the inclinations ariſing from the body, is in a great degree loſt. There may be, and there once was, a more harmonious temperament in the human frame. The rational part of our nature was better enlightened and more vigorous; the paſſions and appetites of the animal part moved under its control. But that ſtate of innocence is no more. Our nature is now degenerated; we find a law in the members warring againſt the law of the mind. This diſorder of our frame is more and more increaſed by thoſe falſe notions of happineſs which we are apt to imbibe, and by the many bad examples among which we paſs our early years, inſomuch, that by the time that we are grown up to the full power and exerciſe of reaſon, we find ourſelves brought under the dominion of ſenſual and wicked inclinations. How then ſhall we recover our liberty? How ſhall we regain the original rectitude of our nature, and obtain a victory over the vices which war againſt the ſoul? Is nature, ſuch as it now is, ſufficient for theſe things? Is reaſon alone an equal match for the paſſions and deſires of the heart, broke looſe from all their reſtraints, authoriſed by cuſtom, and inflamed by example? Can we ceaſe to do evil and learn to do well, purely of ourſelves, and be able to turn the ſtream of our affections from ſenſible and earthly things, to objects worthy of the choice and purſuit of a reaſonable nature? Can we, in ſhort, convert ourſelves by our own ſtrength, and turn from the power of Satan un-

to the living God? Are we ſufficient for theſe things?

We are not. When we would do good evil is preſent with us; the ſenſual part of our nature obtains dominion over the rational; we are chained down to the earth, while we attempt to ſoar to the heavens. Here, therefore, God hath graciouſly interpoſed for our recovery. As he ſent his Son into the world to redeem us from the guilt of ſin and the curſe of the law, he gives us his Holy Spirit to deliver us from the dominion of ſin, and to tranſlate us from the bondage of Satan into the family of Heaven, and the glorious liberty of the children of God. Hence he is ſaid to work in us both to will and to do that which is his good pleaſure. We are ſaid to receive the Spirit, and our bodies are ſtyled the temples of the Holy Ghoſt.

Concerning this Spirit given to thoſe that aſk him, I obſerve, in the *firſt* place, that his influence is conſiſtent with the freedom of a reaſonable being. The aſſiſtance which we receive from above, both in our firſt converſion from ſin, and through the whole courſe of a religious life, are entirely rational, and have only a perſuaſive and moral influence. They do not reſemble the inſpiration of the prophets of old, which was ſudden and violent, and overpowered the mind; which ſuperſeded the uſe of reaſon, and ſuſpended for a while the exerciſe of the natural faculties. The prophets were but the inſtruments of the ſpirit, but we work together with God. The grace of Heaven does not take away the powers of the mind, but exalts them. It does not deſtroy the natural liberty of the mind, it makes us free indeed. If a man loſes

his free agency he ceaſes to be a man. He is a machine, and is acted upon. In oppoſition to this, God is ſaid in Scripture, to draw us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man: that is, in ſuch a manner as is moſt conſiſtent with freedom of choice, and agreeable to the conſtitution of a reaſonable nature. Reaſon being the nobleſt faculty of the human frame, it firſt partakes the influence of the divine Spirit. Its views are enlarged to take in the ſyſtem of divine truth, and its power is increaſed to govern the whole man. Theſe divine aids extend to the heart and the affections, place them on proper objects, and give them their nobleſt joys. In ſhort, they take in the whole of the Chriſtian life. They inſpire good reſolutions and purpoſes of new obedience; they carry us on, and encourage us in the ways of righteouſneſs; they render the practice of our duty eaſy and delightful, and bring us at laſt to the enjoyment of uninterrupted and everlaſting happineſs.

Thus you ſee, that the influence of the divine Spirit is in a way agreeable to the frame of human nature, gentle and perſuaſive; not controlling or obſtructing the uſe of reaſon, but by the uſe of reaſon influencing the will, moderating the affections, and regulating the whole converſation. It is no argument againſt the reality of ſuch divine aids, that they are not diſtinguiſhable from the operation of our own minds, and that we feel them not in a ſenſible and ſtriking manner. How difficult is it in our own character to diſtinguiſh what is natural from what is acquired; to diſtinguiſh between the natural treaſures of the mind, and thoſe foreign ſtores which ſhe imports from education. The Spirit of God acts in ſuch a manner as is moſt agreeable

to the faculties of the mind. It is in this manner alſo, that God acts in the material world. Whatever is done in the heavens, or in the earth, or in the ſea, is brought about by Divine Providence. Yet all that chain of cauſes and effects, from the loweſt up to the throne of God, we call by the name of the courſe of nature. But what is this? The courſe of nature is the energy of God.

In the *ſecond* place, I obſerve, concerning the influence of the Spirit, that its reality is only known by its operation and effect upon our lives. "Marvel not," ſaid our Lord to Nicodemus, "that I "ſaid unto you, Thou muſt be born again. The "wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the "ſound thereof, but canſt not tell whence it cometh, "and whither it goeth. So is every one that is "born of the Spirit." That is, as if he had ſaid, the influences of the ſpirit are indeed imperceptible to ſenſe, and cannot be diſtinguiſhed in the preciſe moment of their operation, but they are viſible and certain in their effects, and in the fruits which they produce. A life of obedience and holineſs, therefore, is the proof, and the only proof, that the Spirit dwells in us. The fruit of the Spirit, ſay the Scriptures, is goodneſs and righteouſneſs and truth. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſs, meekneſs and temperance. The life then, my friends, the life is the criterion and teſt by which we ſhall know if we are born of the Spirit. There are indeed other marks, eaſier attained, which ſome people have found out to themſelves. A light within, a call from heaven, a ſecret voice, and an extraordinary impulſe, theſe are often

the effects not of a divine favour, but of a weak underſtanding, and a wild imagination, and often of ſomething worſe, even of arrant hypocriſy and unbluſhing impudence. Theſe indeed are the marks of a ſpirit which hath often appeared in the world, but which is very different from the Spirit of God. Theſe are the ſymptoms of that intolerant and perſecuting Spirit, the offspring of darkneſs and of demons, which, excepting a few favourites, purſues the human race with unrelenting hatred in this world, and conſigns them over to eternal pains in the next. This is a ſpirit which hath ſlain its thouſands. Fire and ſword mark its approach; its ſteps are in the blood of the juſt, and it ſhakes the rod of extermination over the affrighted earth. But the Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. It fills us with affection and benevolence towards all our brethren of mankind. For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him.

This doctrine of the Spirit dwelling in us, and aſſiſting us to perform good works, furniſheth a ſtrong argument for humility. Why boaſteſt thou, O man? What haſt thou which thou haſt not received? From God deſcendeth every good and every perfect gift. We can do nothing of ourſelves, not even ſo much as to think a good thought. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. He graciouſly accepts of our ſincere endeavours to pleaſe him; and at laſt rewards thoſe ſervices, which by his grace he enables us to perform. Let us therefore be ſenſible of our own imperfections, and give all the praiſe to him. Let this ſtir us up to activity in our Chriſtian courſe. The proper uſe and improvement of this

doctrine is not to ſit ſtill and take our reſt, becauſe God gives us his Holy Spirit, but relying on the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit to move forwards in our Chriſtian race. Seeing God worketh in you, therefore work out your ſalvation. Up therefore and be doing, ſeeing the Lord is with you. You not only act with the force of Providence on your ſide; you have not only the Captain of Salvation fighting with you; but you have alſo his Spirit within you, leading you on to victory.

In the *laſt* place, Let us expreſs our gratitude and praiſe to this divine Gueſt, who vouchſafes to be our guide and our comforter; let us be careful not to grieve and offend him by wicked actions, leſt he withdraw himſelf from us; and let us always remember, that he who is a pure and holy Spirit, cannot dwell in polluted hearts, and in temples that are not his own.

SERMON XXII.

ISAIAH XXVI. 20.

Come my people, enter thou into thy Chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee.

WITHOUT viewing theſe words in connection with what goes before or follows after, I ſhall conſider them as containing an exhortation to religious retirement. Man was intended by his Creator for ſociety. All the powers of his frame, the faculties of his mind, and the qualities of his heart, lead him to the ſocial ſtate as the ſtate of his nature. But although man was made for action, he was alſo intended for contemplation. There is a time when ſolitude has a charm for the ſoul; when weary of the world, its follies and its cares, we love to be alone, to enter into our chamber, to ſhut the door about us, and in ſilence to commune with our heart. Such a retirement, when devoted to pious purpoſes, is highly uſeful to man, and moſt acceptable to God. Hence the holy men are repreſented in Scripture as giving themſelves to meditation; hence Jeſus Chriſt himſelf is deſcribed as ſending the multitude away, and going apart to the mountain.

An opinion once prevailed in the world, and in many parts of it ſtill prevails, that all virtue conſiſted in ſuch a retreat; that the perfection of the Chriſtian life conſiſted in retiring from the world altogether, in withdrawing from human converſe, in

ſhutting ourſelves up in the ſolitude of a cell, and paſſing our days in barren and unprofitable ſpeculation. Such notions of a holy life have no foundation in the word of God. Moſes and the prophets, Jeſus and the apoſtles themſelves, acted a part in public life, and enjoin their diſciples not to withdraw from the world, but to go about doing good; not to wrap up their talent in a napkin, but to improve it by their induſtry; not to put their light under a buſhel, but to make it ſhine before men. The retreat, therefore, which ſcripture recommends, is temporary and not total; is not the retreat of a monk to his cell, or a hermit to his cave; but of men living in the world, going out of it for a time, to return with greater improvement. To retire at times into the cloſet for theſe purpoſes, is of general obligation upon all Chriſtians. To induce you, therefore, to the practice of this duty, I ſhall now ſhow you the advantages which thereby you may expect to reap.

The advantages attending religious retirement are theſe: it takes off the impreſſion which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind; it is favourable for fixing pious purpoſes in the mind, and ſtrengthening our habits of virtue; it brings us to the knowledge of ourſelves; it opens a ſource of new and better entertainment than we meet with in the world.

In the *firſt* place, Religious retirement takes off the impreſſion which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind. The world, my friends, is not in general a ſchool of virtue, it is often the ſcene of vanity and vice. Cor-

tupted manners, vicious deeds, evil communications, ſurround us on every ſide. From our firſt entrance into life, we become ſpectators of the vicious, and witneſſes to the commiſſion of ſin. This preſence of the wicked leſſens our natural horror at a crime, it renders the idea of vice familiar to the mind, and inſenſibly lulls aſleep that guarded circumſpection which ought always to be awake. Beſides this contagion of evil example, the unhappy proneneſs of men to imitate the manners of thoſe with whom they live, adds ſtrength to the temptations of the world. Our favourable opinion of the perſon extends to the action he commits, and by our fatal fondneſs of imitation, we do what we ſee done. Our way then in the world lies through ſnares and precipices; we ſee and we hear at the peril of our ſouls. The contagion in which we live, transfuſes itſelf into our own minds. How often is the purity of the cloſet loſt amid the pollution of the world! The good reſolutions of the morning give way to buſtle and buſineſs, or to the career of pleaſure, and the day that began with innocence and devotion, ends in vanity and vice. Temptations in every form aſſault your innocence, and the adverſary of your ſoul is forever on the watch. One falſe ſtep may ſend you to the bottom of the precipice. One word ſpoken in paſſion, hath given riſe to quarrels that have laſted through life. A ſingle glance of envy, of revenge, or of impure deſire, hath raiſed a conflagration which could only be quenched by blood. To avoid the pollution with which the world is infected, to keep off the intruſion of vain and ſinful thoughts, enter into thy chamber, and ſhut thy doors around thee. There

the wicked ceaſe from troubling, there the man who is wearied of the world is at reſt. There the glare of external objects diſappears, and the chains that bound you to the world are broken. There you ſhut out the ſtrife of tongues, the impertinences of the idle, the lies of the vain, the ſcandal of the malicious, the ſlanders of the defamer, and all that world of iniquity which proceeds from the tongue. In this aſylum thy ſafety dwells. To thy holy retreat, an impure gueſt dares not approach. Enjoying the bleſſed calm and ſerenity of thy own mind, thou heareſt the tempeſt raging around thee and ſpending its ſtrength; the objects of ſenſe being removed, the appetites which they excited, depart along with them. The ſcene being ſhifted, and the actors gone, the paſſions which they raiſed die away.

In the *ſecond* place, This devout retirement is favourable for fixing pious purpoſes in the mind, and ſtrengthening our habits of virtue. We are ſo formed by the Author of our nature, that the material objects with which we are ſurrounded raiſe ideas in us, and make impreſſions upon us merely by their own nature, and without any aſſiſtance from ourſelves. There are motions in the body which are involuntary and ſpontaneous, and there are impreſſions in the mind which are as much out of our power. At the preſence of certain objects, we feel certain paſſions whether we will or not; we cannot command the emotions which ariſe in the mind; on many occaſions we are merely paſſive to the influence of external things. When imminent danger threatens, or the ſhriek of jeopardy is heard, the heart throbs, the blood takes the alarm, and the ſpirits are agitated

without our direction or conſent. As the nature of the plant is affected by the ſoil where it grows; as the nature of the animal is affected by the paſture where he ranges; ſo the character of the man who never thinks, who never retires into himſelf, ariſes from the mode of life in which he is engaged. His mind is in ſubjection to the objects which ſurround him. He paſſes from object to object as the ſcene changes before him, and he is delivered over from paſſion to paſſion according to the events which vary his life. Thus in ſociety we are in a great meaſure governed by accidents, and the mind is paſſive to the impreſſions which it receives.

But in ſolitude we are in a *world of our own.* We can call up what ideas, and converſe with what objects we pleaſe. We can ſay to one deſire, "Go," and to another, "Come." Dazzled no longer with the falſe glitter of the world, we open our eyes to the beauties of that better country which is a heavenly one; ſtunned no more with the noiſe of folly, we can liſten in ſilence to the ſtill ſmall voice. Eſcaped from the broad way, we ſet out on the narrow path. That is the place, and then is the time to ſeal the uſeful truth, and to fix the pious purpoſe. Then you can beſt recollect your native ſtrength, and ſtir up the grace of God which is in you. Then at leiſure you can reflect by what temptations you were formerly foiled, that you may guard againſt them in the time to come; foreſeeing the evil day, you will look out for the beſt ſupport when it comes; and putting on the whole armour of God, you will be able to reſiſt the fiery darts of the evil one, and to go forth conquering and to conquer. By theſe means

the good thoughts which were ſcattered up and down your life will be collected together, and ſettle in a fixed purpoſe of new obedience. The various rays thus converging into one, will kindle into a fervent flame.

In the *third* place, By means of religious retirement, thou wilt be brought to the knowledge of thyſelf. This is a part of our ſuperiority to the other creatures, that we are not confined to preſent objects, that we can extend our view beyond the province of ſenſe, and turn our attention wherever we pleaſe, throughout the whole ſyſtem of nature. The mind can arreſt itſelf in its motion, and become the object of its own contemplation. The nobleſt of ſciences is to know ourſelves. But however uſeful and important this ſtudy is, there is none with which we are ſo little acquainted. Delighting to wander abroad, and familiar every where, you are ſtrangers at home, ſtrangers to your own character, ſtrangers to your own heart, ſtrangers to all that is moſt important for a rational creature to know. You give your thoughts to wander through the whole world; on the wings of imagination you fly from pole to pole; but you never deſcend into yourſelf. For what reaſon art thou ſo averſe to know thyſelf? Becauſe thou art afraid of loſing thine own good opinion; becauſe thou wanteſt to impoſe upon thyſelf, and then to impoſe upon the world. For this cauſe, thou dareſt not appeal to thine own mind, thou dareſt not meet thy heart alone. Thou avoideſt the light, leſt thine evil deeds ſhould be made manifeſt. Thou flieſt from the God within, as Adam when he had fallen fled from the Lord, becauſe thou art afraid. What

can be more ſuſpicious than for reaſonable creatures to decline the bar of reaſon? What can be more ſhameful than for thoſe who have an underſtanding, not to be able or willing to give an account of their actions to themſelves? What can be more reproachful than for men to allow themſelves in a courſe of life, which they have not the courage or the confidence to reflect upon?

Sinner! deal plainly with thyſelf. If thou wert not aſhamed of thyſelf, Why, in the name of the all-knowing God, ſhouldſt thou decline converſing with thyſelf? If all were well at home, what ſhould make thee ſo fond of rambling abroad, and loſing the remembrance of thyſelf in a crowd of vain amuſements? Here, here is the cauſe of thy love of noiſe and hurry, and tumult and diſſipation, and perpetual diverſions: thy aim is by this means to eſcape from thyſelf, to employ and divert thy mind, that it may not be forced upon ſuch an ungrateful ſubject. Yet, here wiſdom begins. Thou never canſt aſcend to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, without knowing thyſelf; and thou canſt never know thyſelf, without retiring from the world, without ſtripping off whatever is artificial about thee, without throwing off the veil which thou weareſt before men, and devoting thy ſecret hours to ſerious conſideration. Enter then into thy chamber, ſhut the doors about thee, commune with thine own heart, be ſtill, ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "Search and try me, O Lord; "ſee if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in "the way everlaſting."

In the *fourth* place, Retirement and meditation will open a ſource of new and better entertainment

than you meet with in the world. You will ſoon find that the world does not perform what it promiſes. The circle of earthly enjoyments is narrow and circumſcribed, the career of ſenſual pleaſure is ſoon run, and when the novelty is over, the charm is gone. Who has not felt the ſatiety and wearineſs of the king of Iſrael, when he cried out, "All is vanity and "vexation of ſpirit?" Unhappy is the man who in theſe caſes has nothing within to conſole him under his diſappointment. Miſerable is the man who has no reſources within himſelf, who cannot enjoy his own company, who depends for happineſs upon the next amuſement, or the news of the day.

But the wiſe man has treaſures within himſelf. He has a ſpring ſhut up, and a fountain ſealed. The hour of ſolitude is the hour of meditation. He communes with his heart alone. He reviews the actions of his paſt life. He corrects what is amiſs. He rejoices in what is right, and, wiſer by experience, lays the plan of his future life. The great and the noble, the wiſe and the learned, the pious and the good, have been lovers of ſerious retirement. On this field the patriot forms his ſchemes, the philoſopher purſues his diſcoveries, the ſaint improves himſelf in wiſdom and goodneſs. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion in every age has adopted as its own. There her ſacred inſpiration is felt, and her holy myſteries elevate the ſoul; there devotion lifts up the voice; there falls the tear of contrition; there the heart pours itſelf forth before Him who made, and Him who redeemed it. Apart from men, you live with Nature, and converſe with God.

i. e.

SERMON XXIII.

ISAIAH lvii. 21.

There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.

IT is univerſally agreed that the works of creation demonſtrate the being and the attributes of the Deity. The inviſible things of God, even his eternal power, his unerring wiſdom and his infinite goodneſs, are every where legible throughout the great book of Nature. It is very aſtoniſhing, however, that many perſons who from the *creation* of the world infer the exiſtence and perfections of the Deity, ſhould, from the *government* of the world, infer the neceſſity of a day of judgment to rectify the courſe of Providence, and vindicate the ways of God. The works of God muſt certainly be uniform and of a piece. According to the repreſentations of Sacred Scripture, the day of judgment was not appointed to account for the conduct of Providence, but to paſs ſentence on the actions of men. All the adminiſtrations of God are conducted with ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs. He is forever employing the power of his providence to favour the cauſe of righteouſneſs, and to diffuſe happineſs over the world. When the bleſſed above ſing the wonders of creating power, and cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;" they alſo add, "Juſt and true are all thy ways, thou King of ſaints." If the Almighty is poſſeſſed of

" infinite perfection; if, as the Scriptures aſſert, he loveth righteouſneſs and hateth iniquity, we may naturally infer it to be one of his eternal decrees, that righteouſneſs and happineſs, that ſin and miſery, muſt be inſeparable in the courſe of things.

Notwithſtanding the force of the arguments that prove this truth, opinions pretty general prevail to the contrary. Many perſons are of opinion that the wicked man has more enjoyment in life than the good man has, that virtue expoſes us to many evils, and that if it were not for a future ſtate, Chriſtians would be of all men the moſt miſerable. The origin of this opinion it is not difficult to unfold. It is natural for men to judge of the courſe of things, by what happens in their own lot. When we are in a proſperous ſituation, when the candle of the Lord ſhineth upon our heads, all nature puts on a face of beauty and wears a ſmiling appearance. But, when adverſity and a train of afflictions come in their turn, the eye of the impatient ſufferer tinctures every thing around him with its own baleful colours. To his diſordered mind, darkneſs ſeems to involve the ſyſtem of nature, malignant demons to uſurp the ſceptre of Providence, and invade the throne of God. Hence the many complaints of good and holy men in ſacred writ, that the righteous were cut off from the earth, whilſt the wicked flouriſhed like a green bay-tree. But theſe were not the maxims which governed their lives, they were only ſudden exclamations made in the moments of impatience under diſtreſs. The univerſal voice of Scripture is expreſſly on the other ſide. " Say ye to the wicked, It " ſhall be ill with him; ſay ye to the righteous, It

" ſhall be well with him. There is no peace, ſaith " my God, to the wicked. Great peace have they " who love the laws of the Lord."

In further treating upon this ſubject, I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you, that there is no peace or happineſs to the wicked, whether you conſider him as a ſubject of the divine government, as a member of ſociety, or as an individual.

In the *firſt* place, then, Let us conſider the wicked in his religious capacity as a ſubject of the divine government.

Religion is the diſtinguiſhing quality of our nature, and is one of the ſtrongeſt features that marks the human character. As it is our diſtinguiſhing quality, ſo it poſſeſſes ſuch extenſive influence, that however overlooked by ſuperficial inquirers, it has given riſe to more revolutions in human ſociety, and to more changes in human manners, than any one cauſe whatever. View mankind in every ſituation, from the earlieſt ſtate of barbarity, down through all the ſucceſſive periods of civilization, till they degenerate to barbarity again, and you will find them influenced ſtrongly by the awe of ſuperior ſpirits, or the dread of infernal fiends. In the heathen world, where mankind had no divine revelation, but followed the impulſe of nature alone, religion was often the baſis of the civil government. Among all claſſes of men, the ſacrifices, the ceremonies and the worſhip of the gods were held in the higheſt reverence. Judge what a ſtrong hold religion muſt have taken of the human heart, when, inſtigated by horror of conſcience, the blinded wretch has ſubmitted to torture his own fleſh before the

ſhrine of the incenſed Deity, and the fond father has been driven to offer up with his own hands his firſt-born for his tranſgreſſion, and the fruit of his body for the ſin of his ſoul. It is poſſible to ſhake off the reverence, but not the dread, of a Deity. Amid the gay circle of his companions, in the hour of riot and diſſipation, the fool may ſay in his heart that there is no God; but his conſcience will meet him when he is alone, and tell him that he is a liar. Heaven will avenge its quarrel on his head. Judge then, my brethren, how miſerable it muſt be for a being made after the image of God, thus to have his glory turned into ſhame. How diſmal muſt the ſituation be for a ſubject of the divine government to conſider himſelf as acting upon a plan to counteract the decrees of God, to defeat the deſigns of eternal Providence, to deface in himſelf the image and the lineaments of heaven, to maintain a ſtate of enmity and war with his Creator, and to aſſociate with the infernal ſpirits, whoſe abode is darkneſs and whoſe portion is deſpair!

Reflections upon ſuch a ſtate will give its full meaſure to the cup of trembling. Was not Belſhazzar, the impious king of Babylon, a ſtriking inſtance of what I am now ſaying? This monarch made a feaſt to a thouſand of his lords, and aſſembled his princes, his concubines and his wives. In order to increaſe the feſtivity, he ſent for the conſecrated veſſels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jeruſalem, and in theſe veſſels, which were holy to the Lord, he made libations to his vain idols, and in his heart bade defiance to the God of Iſrael. But, whilſt thus he defied the

living God, forth came the fingers of a man's hand, and on the wall; which had lately reſounded with joy, wrote the ſentence of his fate! In a moment his countenance was changed, his whole frame ſhook, and his knees ſmote one againſt another, whilſt the prophet in awful accents denounced his doom: "O man, thy kingdom is departing from thee!" Although Providence ſhould not now particularly interpoſe to puniſh thee, O guilty man! yet the ſentence of thy doom is written in thy heart, and there is a prophet within, who upon the commiſſion of crimes will tell thee, that for theſe the kingdom of heaven is departed from thee.

In the *ſecond* place, As wickedneſs makes a man miſerable in his religious character, ſo does it alſo in his ſocial.

However corrupted men may be in their lives, their moral ſentiments are juſt and right; that is, although from an immoderate ſelf-love we may excuſe wickedneſs in ourſelves, yet ſuch is the force of conſcience within, ſo deeply rooted in the mind is the eternal difference between good and evil, that, by the very frame of our natures, we abhor wickedneſs in others. When we are converſant in the world, or give our attention to a ſtory that is a faithful picture of human manners, from the impulſe of natural feeling, we attach ourſelves to the ſide of innocence, we take part with the virtuous hero, and conſider his enemies as our own. There is no vice but what tends to make a man contemptible or odious to ſociety. Againſt the greater and more atrocious crimes, the ſword of the law is forever drawn, and its ſtroke is death. Other vices which come not

under the cognizance of the laws, either have ways of puniſhing themſelves, or are marked with public infamy. Pride makes every affront a torment, and puts a man's happineſs in the power of every fool he meets with. The envious man is literally his own tormentor, and preys upon his own bowels. The drunkard expoſes himſelf to the deriſion of mankind, and falls into follies that cover him with ſhame in his ſober hours. Does not a habit of intoxication deprive a man of all ſenſe of decency, indiſpoſe him for the buſineſs of life, and render him a ſorrow to all his friends? Will the atheiſt conciliate the love of men by ſhewing us that he poſſeſſes not the fear of God? Is not the miſer pointed at with the finger of ſcorn, and doomed to the double curſe of hoarding and guarding? Is not a liar univerſally odious, and does he not prepoſſeſs us againſt him even when he ſpeaks truth? Do not fraud and diſhoneſty mar a man's fortune, ruin his reputation, and hinder his ſucceſs in life?

In truth, my brethren, there is not a ſin but what one way or other is puniſhed in this life. We often err egregiouſly by not attending to the diſtinction between happineſs and the means of happineſs. Power, riches and proſperity, thoſe means of happineſs and ſources of enjoyment, in the courſe of providence are ſometimes conferred upon the worſt of men. Such perſons poſſeſs the good things of life, but they do not enjoy them. They have the means of happineſs, but they have not happineſs itſelf. A wicked man can never be happy. It is the firm decree of Heaven, eternal and unchangeable as JEHOVAH himſelf, that miſery muſt ever attend on guilt,

that when ſin enters, happineſs takes its departure. There is no ſuch thing in nature, my brethren, there is no ſuch thing in nature, as a vitious or unlawful pleaſure. What we generally call ſuch, are pleaſures in themſelves lawful, procured by wrong means, or enjoyed in a wrong way; procured by injuſtice, or enjoyed with intemperance; and ſurely neither injuſtice nor intemperance have any charm for the mind; and unleſs we are framed with a very uncommon temper of mind and body, injuſtice will be hurtful to the one, and intemperance fatal to the other. Unruly deſires, and bad paſſions, the gratification of which is ſometimes called pleaſure, are the ſource of almoſt all the miſeries in human life. When once indulged, they rage for repeated gratification, and ſubject us, at all times, to their clamours and importunity. When they are gratified, if they give any joy, it is the joy of fiends, the joy of the tormented, a joy which is purchaſed at the expence of a good conſcience, which riſes on the ruins of the public peace, and proceeds from the miſeries of our fellow-creatures. The forbidden fruit proves to be the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah. One deed of ſhame is ſucceeded by years of penitence and pain. A ſingle indulgence of wrath has raiſed a conflagration which neither the force of friendſhip, nor length of time, nor the vehemence of interceſſion, could mitigate or appeaſe, and which could only be quenched by the effuſion of human blood. One drop from the cup of this powerful ſorcereſs, has turned the living ſtream of joy into waters of bitterneſs. "There is no peace, ſaith my "God, to the wicked."

If a wicked man could be happy, Who might have been ſo happy as Haman? Raiſed from an inferior ſtation to great riches and power, exalted above his rivals, and above the princes of the empire, favourite and prime miniſter to the greateſt monarch in the world. But with all theſe advantages on his ſide, and under all theſe ſmiles of fortune, his happineſs was deſtroyed by the want of a bow, uſual to thoſe of his ſtation, from one of the porters of the palace. Enraged with this neglect, this vain great man cried out in the pang of diſappointment, "All "this availeth me nothing, ſo long as I ſee Mordecai "ſitting at the king's gate." This ſeeming affront ſat deep on his mind. He meditated revenge. A ſingle victim could not ſatisfy his malice. He wanted to have a glutting vengeance. He reſolved, for this purpoſe, to involve thouſands in deſtruction, and to make a whole nation fall a ſacrifice to the indulgence of his mean-ſpirited pride. But, as it generally happens, his wickedneſs proves his ruin, and he erected the gallows on which he himſelf was doomed to be hanged!

In the *third* place, If we conſider man as an individual, we ſhall ſee a further confirmation of the truth contained in the text, "That there is no peace "to the wicked."

In order to ſtrengthen the obligations to virtue, Almighty God hath rendered the practice of ſin fatal to our peace as individuals, as well as pernicious to our intereſts as members of ſociety. From the ſinner God withdraws his favour and the light of his countenance. How dark will that mind be, which no beam from the Father of lights ever viſits? How

joyleſs that heart which the ſpirit of life never animates! When ſin entered into paradiſe, the angels of God forſook the place. So from the ſoul that is polluted with guilt, peace and joy and hope, thoſe good angels, vaniſh and depart. What ſucceeds to this family of heaven? Confuſion, ſhame, remorſe, deſpair.

Cætera deſunt.

SERMON XXIV.

PSALM lxxviii. 1.

Give ear, O my people, to my law.

THIS is the call which God addreſſed to his ancient people, and which at ſundry times and in divers manners he addreſſes to the world. It is the voice of the Almighty to mankind in every age. His voice all nature hears, and his law all nature obeys. The ſun moves in the path marked out to him by his Creator; the moon keeps her appointed courſe, and the hoſt of heaven proceed from age to age in their original beauty. The ſeaſons know their time, and the earth obeys the law impreſſed upon it at firſt. The elements confeſs their Lord; the tempeſt hears his voice, and the ſea ſubmits to the mandate which ſaid, "Hitherto ſhalt thou "come, and no farther; here ſhall thy waves be "ſtaid." The orders of celeſtial ſpirits, the principalities and powers of heaven, obey the command of their King, miniſter to the purpoſes of his providence, and in acts of goodneſs, or on errands of mercy, perform his pleaſure.

Throughout all nature, one being alone is deaf to the voice and diſobedient to the command of God, that is, the *ſinner*. He alone has departed from his ſphere, has rebelled againſt the law of his nature, and rejected the univerſal dominion of the Deity in the univerſe. To recall him from this rebellious

ſtate, to replace him in his original ſtation, and reſtore him again to the kingdom of God, is the end of true religion. For this purpoſe Moſes and the prophets were inſpired, Jeſus and the apoſtles were ſent. For this purpoſe the heaven was opened, the Almighty appeared, and the voice uttered to the world, "Give ear, my people, to my law."

Your obligation to obey this law will appear, if you conſider that it is the law of your nature, that it is the law of heaven, that it is the law of ſociety, and the law of happineſs.

In the *firſt* place, It is the law of your nature.

When God created man, he did not leave him to act at random, or to live in a ſtate of anarchy. He gave him a law, the emanation of eternal wiſdom and the tranſcript of Divine perfection. The ſame fingers that upon Mount Sinai wrote the commandments upon tables of ſtone, had written them beforehand upon the living tables of the human heart. The foundation of morality is laid deep in human nature; its principles reſult from the conſtitution of our frame; and its authority will be ſupreme, while there is a mind to diſcern, or a heart to feel, or a conſcience to judge. Darkneſs is not more different from light, nor bitter from ſweet, than good is from evil, and virtue from vice. You are no more maſters of the emotions that riſe in the mind, than of the ſenſations which riſe in the body. You can no more give the law to internal nature than to external nature. You may as well call the ſun to come down from the firmament, as aim to extinguiſh the light of heaven which ſhines in the breaſt. Inferior animals are incapable of morality. They have no law

but inſtinct; they are left to obey the call of appetite, and to follow blindly the prevailing impulſe. But it is not ſo with man. Reaſon is his law; and the dictate of virtue is the dictate of nature. The queſtion with him is not, what is the call of appetite? but, what is the voice of reaſon? Not what is the prevailing impulſe? but, what is the impulſe which ought to prevail?

If, therefore, you diſown the obligation of this law, you renounce your nature and unman yourſelf. If you claim an exemption from the authority of reaſon and ſentiment and conſcience; if you take the licenſe to indulge every appetite and every paſſion without reſtraint or control; you may;—but firſt come down from your rank in the ſcale of being; break off all intercourſe with rational creatures; depart from the ſociety of men; go to your equals; herd with the animals of the field, and eat graſs with the brutes that periſh: there diſplay humanity degraded: exhibit thyſelf a monument of folly and guilt, to be pointed at by the hand of ſcorn, and to be ſhunned like the peſtilence. If ever, like the Monarch of Babylon, thou ſhalt riſe from thy degraded ſtate; if ever thine underſtanding ſhall return, and thou ſhalt be able to lift up thine eyes to heaven, like him thou wilt praiſe and extol and glorify the King of heaven, and give ear to that law which he promulgates to the armies in heaven and to the inhabitants of the earth.

In the *ſecond* place, Your obligation to obey this law will further appear when you conſider that it is the law of Heaven.

It comes to you not only recommended by your

own authority, but it comes enforced by a higher authority, that of God himſelf. The appearances of the Almighty to confirm the law, the prophets and the goſpel, were made for the inſtruction and improvement of thoſe who ſaw them, and are recorded for the inſtruction and improvement of thoſe who read them. The mighty God, even the Lord, hath ſpoken, and called the earth from the riſing of the ſun to where he goeth down. The firſt promulgation of the law was from Mount Sinai. To ſtrike a rude and barbarous people, to reclaim a perverſe and obſtinate generation, it was requiſite that the arm of power ſhould be ſtretched out, and that the majeſty of terror ſhould be diſplayed. Accordingly, when the law was given from Sinai, there was blackneſs and darkneſs and tempeſt; there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount; and when Moſes brought the people from the camp to meet with God, they trembled as one man; and hill Sinai was altogether on a flame, and the ſmoke thereof went up as the ſmoke of a furnace, for the Lord deſcended upon it in fire, and the mountain quaked; and when the voice of the trumpet ſounded long, and waxed louder and louder, God called Moſes up to the top of the mount, and gave the law.

The ſame precepts that were given upon Mount Sinai, Jeſus Chriſt came to confirm and to extend. At his firſt public appearance, in his ſermon on the mount, he republiſhed, reſtored and perfected the law. The new diſpenſation indeed was different from the old. The God of Abraham dwelt in darkneſs, and was clothed with terror. The God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt dwells in light, and

is cloathed with grace. Miracles of power confirmed the one; miracles of grace diſtinguiſhed the other. We come not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion. At the publiſhing of the goſpel no fire deſcended, no thunders rolled: at the publiſhing of the goſpel, when our Saviour, being baptized, entered upon his miniſtry, the heaven was opened over his head, the Spirit deſcended upon him in the form of a dove, the meſſenger of peace, and a voice came from the overſhadowing cloud, "This "is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed." Revelation then concurs with reaſon in eſtabliſhing the law, and to the voice of nature is added the voice of God. Such an authority you will not deſpiſe. You will not join with the impious king of Egypt, who hardened his heart, and ſaid, "Who is "the Lord that I ſhould obey his voice?"

In the *third* place, Our obligation to obey the law will be further manifeſt, when we conſider that it is the law of ſociety.

That righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach but alſo a depreſſion to any people, are truths ſo univerſally received as to require no confirmation. All law givers in all ages have thought ſo, and made it their object to cultivate juſtice and temperence and fortitude and induſtry, conſcious that public virtue is the ſource of public happineſs. Philoſophers and moraliſts have been of the ſame opinion; and have taught, with one conſent, that the good morals of the people were the ſtability of the government, and the true ſource of public proſperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of theſe ſpeculations. If we

conſult the hiſtory of the moſt renowned nations that have made a figure in the world, we ſhall find that they roſe to greatneſs by virtue, and ſunk into contempt through vice; that they obtained dominion by their temperance and probity of manners, and a ſerious regard to religion, and when they grew diſſolute, corrupted and profane, they became ſlaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political conſtitution is broken, it is haſtening to its decline. When internal ſymptoms of weakneſs appear, the leaſt external violence will accompliſh its diſſolution.

It is a duty, then, which we owe to ſociety and to our country, to obſerve the rules of righteouſneſs; for in order to be good members of ſociety and true patriots, we muſt be virtuous men.

To ſhow your obligation to give ear to this law, let us, in the *laſt* place, conſider that it is the law of happineſs.

This, in ſome meaſure, follows from what has been already ſaid; for if virtue be neceſſary to the happineſs of public ſocieties, it is alſo neceſſary to the happineſs of private families and of private men, unleſs we can ſuppoſe the body politic to be flouriſhing, while every individual is in miſery and diſtreſs. In conſulting for others, all agree that virtue leads to happineſs; but if for others, why not for you? When you conſult for them, you have no paſſions to darken your underſtanding and perplex your judgment. When you conſider with coolneſs and with candour, the obſervation and experience that all of us

have had occaſion to make, will be ſufficient to convince you, that the law of the Lord is truly favourable to the intereſts and friendly to the happineſs of man; that it correſponds to the juſt dictates of the mind, and conſults the beſt affections of the heart. What does it forbid? Deſires, paſſions and vices, from which for our own ſakes we ſhould abſtain, though there was no ſuch prohibition. It forbids the gratification of deſires which would lead us to ruin; the indulgence of paſſions which are the troubles of human life, and the ſource of our greateſt miſery; the commiſſion of vices which waken remorſe, and deliver us up to the tormentors. What does the law of the Lord command? What is lovely and pure and praiſe-worthy; what tends to make men peaceable, gentle, humane, merciful, benevolent and happy.

SERMON XXV.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

For ſcarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man ſome would even dare to die. But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for us.

THE Apoſtle Paul, the author of this epiſtle, was bred at the feet of Gamaliel, and inſtructed in all the learning of the Jews. To his Hebrew literature he ſuperadded the erudition of the Gentiles; for we find him in his epiſtles quoting their celebrated authors, and alluding to their remarkable cuſtoms and the events in their hiſtory. Theſe verſes which I have now read, carry an alluſion and reference to a diſtinction of characters which prevailed among the Jews, and to ſome illuſtrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addreſſed this epiſtle.

The Jews diſtinguiſhed men with reſpect to their characters, into ſinners, juſt men, and good men. Sinners are thoſe who violate the laws of God and man, who diſturb the public peace, and are bad members of ſociety. A juſt man is one who does no injury to his neighbour, who gives no cauſe of offence to the world, who pays his debts, who conforms to the letter of the law, and who is not deficient in any of the great duties of life. A good

man is one who goes farther; who is not only innocent but uſeful, who is not only decent but exemplary, who is generous, beneficent, public-ſpirited; who ſacrifices his eaſe, his pleaſure, his ſafety, and, when his country calls for it, who ſacrifices his life for the public good. Such was the character of this Apoſtle himſelf. In order to propagate the Chriſtian religion among the nations, the greateſt bleſſing of God to the world, in order to diffuſe the knowledge of this religion, he gave up all that was dear in life, undertook long and hazardous journeys, expoſed himſelf to the dangers of the deep, to the chains of captivity, to the ſword of the perſecutor, to the deriſion and hatred of Jews and Gentiles. Accordingly, he met with this return, which he here mentions as being ſometimes made to ſuperior goodneſs; for we read in the ſixteenth chapter of this epiſtle, that he found perſons who for his life would have laid down their own.

The Apoſtle alſo in theſe verſes alludes to ſome illuſtrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addreſſes this epiſtle. The love of their country was the darling paſſion of that great people. All the ſoul went out in this generous ardour, and every private affection flowed in the channel of the public welfare. Judge what a ſtrong hold it muſt have taken of the heart, when it glowed even in the female breaſt; when the wife encouraged the huſband, and the mother exhorted the ſon, to die for their country. It was a principle in the breaſt of every Roman, that he owed his life to his country. This being the ſpirit of the people, gave birth to many illuſtrious and heroic actions. The ſpirit of patriotiſm

glowed among the people for many ages of the republic; one hero ſprung from the aſhes of another; and great men aroſe from age to age, who devoted themſelves to death for the public good. Theſe being the moſt celebrated actions in the hiſtory of mankind, the Apoſtle here compares them with the death of Jeſus Chriſt. Following the train of thought ſuggeſted by the Apoſtle, I ſhall ſhow you the infinite ſuperiority of that love which prompted Jeſus to die for the ſins of the world, to that patriotiſm which prompted the heroes and great men of old to die for their friends or for their country.

In the *firſt* place, then, Thoſe who devoted themſelves to death for their friends or their country, ſubmitted to a fate which they muſt one day have ſuffered. But Jeſus Chriſt, who is the true God and poſſeſſeth eternal life, ſubmitted to death for our redemption.

We are all born mortal creatures. Sprung from the duſt, we return to the duſt again. The ſentence of the Lord is paſſed upon all fleſh, and there is no exemption from the law of mortality. We know not how ſoon our laſt hour may come. The darts of death are continually on the wing; the arrow of deſtruction flieth by night, and ſmiteth at noon-day; victims are daily falling at our right hand and at our left, and we know not how ſoon we too may fall a ſacrifice. He, therefore, who expoſes himſelf to danger, or devotes himſelf to death for the good of others, only anticipates the evil day, only reſigns a life which he muſt ſoon part with, and ſubmits to a doom which ſooner or later he muſt lay his account to endure. But Jeſus Chriſt

was the King eternal and immortal. His outgoings were from everlaſting, and he is God bleſſed forever. He would have remained happy in himſelf, happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of his own perfections, happy in the adminiſtration and government of the moral world, though he had never caſt an eye of pity upon mortal man. He would have inherited the praiſes of eternity though man had never been redeemed. Yet for our ſakes he left the glories of the heavens, he veiled his Divinity in a form of fleſh, he took our nature with all its infirmities upon him, he ſubmitted to every affliction which embitters human life, and he ſuffered an excrutiating, an ignominious and an accurſed death. For the ſalvation and the happineſs of the world which he had made, the King of kings appeared in the form of a ſervant, and the Lord of life was crucified at Jeruſalem. A crown of thorns was put on that head where the diadem of nature was wont to ſit. Where is the deed of human virtue that can ſtand in compariſon with this meritorious exertion of the Divine benevolence? All the perfection of created nature fades before it, and is but a foil to ſet off the brightneſs of redeeming love.

In the *ſecond* place, Thoſe among the ſons of men who devoted themſelves to death for the good of others, made the ſacrifice for their friends, for thoſe by whom they were beloved; but Jeſus died for his enemies.

We are united to our friends by the ſtrongeſt ties of affection, we are intereſted in all that befals them, and adopt their joys or their ſorrows. Long habits of attachment, and a mutual intercourſe of good of-

fices, draw cloſe the cords of friendſhip, and make them twine with every ſtring of life. Hence we are fellow-ſufferers with our friends in diſtreſs, we are afflicted in all their afflictions, ſo that ſuffering a great temporal evil for them, is in reality removing a load from our own minds. Thus ſtrongly are we attached to our friends, nor is the charm leſs which binds us to the community. The ſacred name of country, ſtrikes us with veneration; we feel an enthuſiaſm for our native land; when it is in danger, hardſhips are cheerfully undergone, and death ſcarce appears an evil in ſuch a glorious cauſe. Such inducements there are to him who dies for his friends or his country. But Jeſus died for the redemption of his enemies, for thoſe who threw off their allegiance to him, who rebelled againſt his authority, and roſe up in arms againſt their benefactor. Their groans would never have reached his ear, nor afflicted his heart, had he not graciouſly inclined to ſympathize. The miſery of mankind would never have diſturbed the happineſs of the Divine nature, would never have thrown a cloud over the ſerenity of the heavens, nor made a pauſe in the alleluiahs of the bleſſed, had he not choſen to bear their ſorrows. It was unmerited goodneſs, it was ſovereign mercy, it was pure benevolence, it was love truly divine, that moved him to interpoſe in our behalf. He ſaw the race of men on the very brink of deſtruction, he ſaw the bottomleſs pit juſt opening to ſwallow them up, and in the moment of danger, the Redeemer appeared, gracious to pity, mighty to ſave. A cloud had long been gathering over the nations, the hand of the Omnipotent was ſtretched out in wrath, the thunder

of his power was ready to burſt over a devoted world; when the Patron and the Interceſſor of the human race ſtepped in, and ſtayed the avenging arm with the words of mercy: "Lo I come to do thy "will. Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou doſt not "deſire. On me let thine anger fall. Let me die "that theſe may live."

In the *third* place, He who dies a martyr for the public good, departs with honor; but Jeſus made his departure with ignominy and ſhame.

It is honorable, it is glorious, to die for the public good. He who falls a martyr to the happineſs of mankind, is ſupported by the native fortitude of the ſoul, is carried forward by the conſciouſneſs of a good cauſe, is encouraged with the admiration and applauſe of the world, and becomes famous to all ſucceeding times. To him the temple of fame ſpontaneous opens its gate, his name is repeated with applauſe, honors are paid to his memory, and he is the heir of perpetual praiſe. Circumſtances of ſuch a nature take away the terror of death. The ſecret conſciouſneſs of a great ſoul, the approach of an event which is ſo glorious in itſelf, and ſo beneficial to the world, the anticipation of the praiſes of ſucceeding times, exalt the man, and fill him with the elevation and magnanimity of virtue. Few enjoyments in life can be compared with a death ſo glorious. But Jeſus Chriſt ſubmitted to the ignominious death of the croſs. The greateſt trial and exerciſe of virtue, is when an innocent man ſubmits to the imputation of a crime that others may be free from the puniſhment. This our Lord did. In his life he was branded with the blackeſt names, and accu-

ſed of the moſt flagitious crimes; branded with the names of publican and ſinner, accuſed of aſſociating with the profligate, and of being in compact with the powers of darkneſs. But at his latter end, in a peculiar manner, he endured the ſhame. He was betrayed like an impoſtor by one of his own diſciples, apprehended like a robber by a band of ſoldiers, led like a malefactor through the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, nailed like a murderer to the accurſed tree, and in the ſight of Iſrael died the death of a traitor and a ſlave, that he might atone for the real guilt of men. In all theſe reſpects the merit of Jeſus was infinitely ſuperior to the heroiſm of men. As the heavens are higher than the earth, as the Moſt High God excels the offspring of the duſt, ſo much ſuperior was his love to their beneficence.

To conclude, Let me aſk you, my brethren, what impreſſion does the love of Jeſus make upon your hearts, what influence does it exert upon your lives? They whoſe minds are dazzled with the idea of falſe glory, with arms and conqueſts and fields of battle, and triumphal proceſſions and ſongs of victory, may not be diſpoſed to reliſh thoſe acts of heroiſm which have nothing of the ſword in them. But to the mind that is freed from vulgar prejudice, and acquainted with true glory, the triumphs of Jeſus will appear the greater that they are the triumphs of peace, that they were not obtained at the expence of ſlaughtered thouſands, nor erected on the ruin of nations, but roſe on the baſis of general happineſs, and everlaſting life to all good men.

Are you then actuated with a proper ſenſe of gratitude to this Captain of our ſalvation? The

temporal hero and deliverer is received with a tribute of applauſe; every heart beats with admiration, and every tongue is vocal in his praiſe. Let us alſo celebrate the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of our fallen race, who delivered us from everlaſting wrath, and opened a way to the heavens by the blood of his croſs. Beautified with his ſalvation, let us rejoice in the Saviour, ſaying with the Apoſtle, "God forbid "that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of Jeſus "Chriſt." Let us alſo love Him who firſt loved us. Let us give the chief place in our hearts to that Divine Friend of mankind, whoſe affection to us was ſtronger than death.

SERMON XXVI.

PROVERBS xii. 26.

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.

THE ſentiments of men concerning virtue, and their own particular practice, form a very ſtrange and ſtriking contraſt. Notwithſtanding their own irregular or imperfect conduct, a general feeling, with regard to morality, pervades the human ſpecies. Philoſophers have differed about the origin of moral diſtinctions, and delivered various theories concerning virtue; but the people who judge from their feelings, have no ſyſtem but one; and whenever right and wrong become the ſubject of deciſion, if the fact be fully explained, the voice of mankind is uniform and conſtant.

Without this moral ſenſe or ſentiment, the queſtion with regard to virtue had never been ſtarted at all, nor exerciſed the ingenuity of the greateſt and beſt ſpirits in every age of the world. For, independent of the national religions, men aroſe among the heathens who ſtrove to improve or reform their countrymen, the lights of one age ſhone to another, the great and the good not only left their example, but lifted up their voice to ages which were to come.

Religion gives its powerful ſanction to the maxims of morality, and this volume was written to republiſh that law which is engraven on the heart.

The book from which theſe words are taken, was the work of a great king who ſometimes left the throne to adorn it the more, and, retiring from the ſplendid follies of a court, conſecrated his hours to the benefit of all poſterity. It was addreſſed by Solomon to his ſon, and contains ſuch ideas of religion, and urges ſuch motives to virtue, as are moſt effectual with the young, repreſenting them as the perfection of human nature, and the true excellence of man. "The righteous (ſays he) is more excellent than his "neighbour." With great propriety is this picture ſet before the young; for the love of excellence is natural to the youthful mind. What is manly, what is generous, what is honorable, are then the objects of admiration and purſuit; fired with noble emulation, each ingenuous diſciple aſpires to be more excellent than his neighbour.

The objections againſt a holy life have proceeded on maxims directly contrary to the text. The inducements to vice, which have been powerful in all ages, are the ſame that were preſented by the tempter to our firſt parents. Wiſdom was promiſed, "Ye ſhall be wiſe to know good and evil;" the attractions of ambition were preſented, "Ye ſhall be "as gods;" the allurements of pleaſure were added, and the forbidden fruit recommended as "good for "food and pleaſant to the eye." If in oppoſition to theſe it ſhall be ſhown, that the righteous man is wiſer, and greater, and happier, than his neighbour, the objections againſt religion will be removed, the ways of Providence will be vindicated, and virtue eſtabliſhed upon an everlaſting foundation.

In the *firſt* place, The righteous man is wiſer than his neighbour.

There is no part of his nature in which man is ſo earneſt to excel, and ſo jealous of a defect, as his underſtanding. Men will give up any part of their frame ſooner than this; they will ſubſcribe to many infirmities and errors, they will confeſs a want of temper, and the proper government of their paſſions, they will even admit deviations with regard to the leſſer moralities, but never yield the ſmalleſt iota in what reſpects their intellectual abilities.

No wonder that man is jealous of his underſtanding, for it is his prerogative and his glory. This draws the line between the animal and the intellectual world, aſcertains our rank in the ſcale of being, and not only raiſes us above inferior creatures, but makes us approach to a nature which is divine. This enters into the foundation of character, for without intellectual abilities, moral qualities cannot ſubſiſt, and a good heart will go wrong without the guidance of a good underſtanding. Without the direction and the government of wiſdom, courage degenerates into raſhneſs, juſtice hardens into rigour, and benevolence becomes an indiſcriminate good nature, or a blameable facility of manners. Where then is wiſdom to be found, and what is the path of underſtanding? If you will truſt the dictates of religion and reaſon, to be virtuous is to be wiſe. The teſtimony of all who have gone before you, confirms the deciſion. In oppoſition, however, to the voice of religion, of reaſon, and of mankind, there are multitudes in every age who reckon themſelves more excellent than their neighbours, by treſpaſſing againſt the laws which all ages have counted ſacred, the younger by the purſuit of criminal gratification, the old by habits of deceit and fraud.

The early period of life is frequently a ſeaſon of deluſion. When youth ſcatters its blandiſhments, and the ſong of pleaſure is heard, "Let us crown "ourſelves with roſe-buds before they are withered, "and let no flower of the ſpring paſs away;" the inexperienced and the unwary liſten to the ſound, and ſurrender themſelves to the enchantment. Not ſatisfied with thoſe juſt and maſculine joys which nature offers and virtue conſecrates, they ruſh into the exceſſes of unlawful pleaſure; not ſatisfied with thoſe fruits bordering the path of virtue, which they may taſte and live, they put forth their hand to the forbidden tree. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till ſinful pleaſure becomes a purſuit that employs all the faculties, and abſorbs all the time of its votaries.

There is no moderation nor government in vice. Deſires that are innocent may be indulged with innocence; pleaſures that are pure may be purſued with purity, and the round of guiltleſs delights may be made without encroaching on the great duties of life. But guilty pleaſures become the maſters and the tyrants of the mind; when theſe lords acquire dominion, they bring all the thoughts into captivity, and rule with unlimited and deſpotic ſway.

Look around you. Conſider the fate of your equals in age, who have been ſwept away, not by the hand of time, but by the ſcythe of intemperance, and involved in the ſhade of death. Contemplate that cloud which veſts the inviſible world, where their manſion is fixed for ever. When the ſons of the Siren call you to the banquet of vice, ſtop in the midſt of this career, pauſe on the brink, look down,

and while yet one throb belongs to virtue, turn back from the verge of deſtruction. Think of the joyful morning that riſes after a victory over ſin, reflection thy friend, memory ſtored with pleaſant images, thy thoughts like good angels announcing peace and preſaging joy.

Or, if that will not ſuffice, turn to the ſhades of the picture, and behold the ruin that falſe pleaſure introduces into human nature. Behold a rational being arreſted in his courſe. A character that might have ſhone in public and in private life, caſt into the ſhades of oblivion; a name that might have been uttered with a tear, and left as an inheritance to a race to come, conſigned to the roll of infamy. All that is great in human nature ſacrificed at the ſhrine of ſenſual pleaſure in this world, and the candidate for immortality in the next, plunged into the irremediable gulf of folly, diſſipation and endleſs miſery.

Cætera deſunt.

SERMON XXVII.

DANIEL xi. 32.

The people that do know their God ſhall be ſtrong.

THE follies and vices which diſfigure human life, do not always proceed from a principle of depravity. The thoroughly abandoned, who ſin from forethought and contrivance, who commit iniquity upon a fixed plan, and who are wicked merely from a love of wickedneſs, I hope and believe are not a numerous claſs. The indiſcretions and vices into which men fall, I am apt to imagine proceed often from a weakneſs of mind rather than from a badneſs of heart. There is a certain feebleneſs in the ſprings of actions, a facility of diſpoſition, a fillineſs of ſoul, which marks the character, and runs through the life of many men, as pernicious to them in the conduct of life, as a principle of actual depravity could be. Perſons of this claſs, properly ſpeaking, ſuſtain no character at all. They aſſert not the rights of an independent being, they make no original efforts of mind, but patiently ſurrender themſelves to accident, to be guided by events, and to be faſhioned by thoſe with whom they live. They have not ſtrength of mind to ſtand alone, they dare not walk in a path unleſs it is beaten. Feebleneſs, fluctuation, timidity, irreſolution, fill up the period of their inſignificant days, and often betray them into crimes as well as indiſcretions.

This weakneſs of mind is not only pernicious but criminal. There are mental defects that are inconſiſtent with a ſtate of virtue. The Sacred Scriptures never draw the line of diſtinction between intellectual and moral qualities, but preſcribe both as requiſite to form the character of the righteous man. Hence a ſound mind, as well as a good heart is mentioned as an ingredient in the character of a ſaint. Hence, in the ſacred books, religion and virtue go under the name of *wiſdom*, vice and wickedneſs under the name of *folly*. Hence intellectual qualities become the ſubject of divine precept, and we are called upon to be wiſe and to be ſtrong, as well as to be holy and to be pure. In oppoſition to the feeble-minded, it is ſaid in the text, that they who know their God, or are truly religious, are ſtrong. Religion, when rightly underſtood, and virtue, when properly practiſed, give nerves and vigour to the mind, infuſe into the ſoul a ſecret ſtrength, and, preſenting a future world to our faith, make us ſuperior to the dangers and temptations of the preſent.

To ſhow what this ſtrength is, I ſhall ſet before you ſome of the moſt remarkable ſcenes in human life in which the feeble-minded give way, and in which they who know their God are ſtrong. This ſtrength then inſpired into the mind by the knowledge of God, makes us ſuperior to the opinion and faſhion of the world, ſuperior to the difficulties and dangers of the world, ſuperior to the pleaſures and temptations of the world, and ſuperior to deſponding fears at our departure from the world.

In the *firſt* place, It makes us ſuperior to the opinion and faſhion of the world.

To ſuſtain an amiable character ſo as to be beloved by thoſe with whom we live, to maintain a ſacred regard to the approbation of the wiſe and good, and to follow thoſe things which are of good report, when at the ſame time they are pure and lovely and honourable, is the duty of every honeſt man. But unhappily the bulk of the world is not compoſed of the wiſe and good; religion and virtue are not always in the faſhion; to fix the rule of life, therefore, by the public approbation or diſlike, is to make the ſtandard of morality uncertain and variable. According to this doctrine, the Chriſtian life would be the work of mere caprice, there would be a faſhion in morals as well as in dreſs, and what is virtue, or vice in one age or country, would not be ſo in another. In ſuch critical caſes, when truth is to be defended, or integrity to be held faſt againſt the current of popular opinion, the feeble-minded are apt to make ſhipwreck of the faith. The feeble-minded man reſts not upon himſelf, he has nothing within to ſupport him, he thinks, and acts, and lives by the opinion of others. "What will the world ſay?" is the queſtion that he puts to himſelf on all occaſions. Thou fool! look inwards, thine own heart will tell thee more than all the world. This puſillanimous deference to the opinions of others, this criminal compliance to the public voice, will make you loſe your all, your ſoul.

Hence, in certain companies, men are aſhamed of their religion. They lend a pleaſed ear to arguments that ſhake the foundations of their faith: they join in the laugh that is raiſed at the expence of all that they hold ſacred and venerable, and themſelves

aſſume the ſpirit, and ſpeak the words of profaneneſs, while the heart often ſecretly agonizes for the liberties of the tongue. In oppoſition to ſuch characters, the man who is truly religious, performs his duty through bad report as well as through good. The applauſe of ſuch fools as make a mock at ſin, he deſpiſes. His ſtandard of moral conduct, is his own conſcience well informed by the word of God. He knows that the faſhion of the world paſſeth away, and vice or folly is not recommended to him by being practiſed by others. He remembers the words of his Maſter, "Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, of him "ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed." He dares to be ſingular and good: "Though all men forſake "thee, yet will not I."

In the *ſecond* place, This ſtrength inſpired by true religion, makes us ſuperior to the difficulties and dangers we meet with in the world.

The feeble-minded man is intimidated upon the ſlighteſt occaſion: he ſtarts at difficulties, and ſhrinks from dangers, whenever they preſent themſelves. Happy to catch at any ſubterfuge, he finds or makes a thouſand obſtacles to the diſcharge of his duty; and when any thing great is to be done, there is "a "lion in the way." What infinite miſchief has this puſillanimity done in the world! How often has the beſt and moſt generous cauſe been loſt by the weakneſs of its defenders! How often have the moſt innocent and worthy characters ſuffered by the ſhameful cowardice of their friends! How often have men purchaſed to themſelves an inglorious eaſe, an infamous tranquillity, at the expence of character and conſcience, and every thing great and good!

Very different is the character of him who is ſtrong in the Lord. When he is aſſured he is in the right path, he ſees no obſtacles in the way. Nothing is difficult to a determined mind. Through the divine aid, reſolution is omnipotent. To the unwearied efforts of perſevering courage, art and nature have yielded: and there is a ladder by which the heavens may be ſcaled. Through Chriſt ſtrengthening him, the man of God can do all things. No appearance of difficulty, no form of danger, no face of death, terrifies him from doing his duty. He gives up his poſſeſſions, his country, his parents, his friends, his wife and children, his own life alſo, rather than deſert the poſt of honor aſſigned to him by Providence. "None of theſe things move me," ſaith an Apoſtle, "neither account I my life dear unto myſelf, ſo that "I may finiſh my courſe with joy. What mean you "to weep, and to break my heart? for I am willing "not to be bound only, but to die at Jeruſalem, for "the name of the Lord Jeſus."

This was not the vain boaſt of men who were brave when the day of battle was diſtant, and who in the midſt of tranquillity, talked of deſpiſing danger. It was the ſpeech of one who acted what he ſpoke. To the confirmation of it, we can adduce a cloud of witneſſes, an hoſt of martyrs, multitudes of all nations, and ages, and conditions, for whom the flames of the tormentor were kindled to no purpoſe; againſt whom the ſword of perſecution was drawn in vain; who held faſt their integrity, though they knew death to be the conſequence, and followed their Redeemer in a path that was marked with blood. Among theſe martyrs, doubtleſs there were

many who naturally were as feeble, and flexible, and timorous, as any of you are: but when they were inſpired with this hidden ſtrength, and were ſupported by the everlaſting arms, the timorous waxed valiant, and the feeble became ſtrong in the Lord.

Cætera deſunt.

SERMON XXVIII.

EXOD. xxiii. 2.

Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

IMITATION is one of the great characteriſtics of the human ſpecies. As the paſſion for ſociety is ſtrong in the breaſts of all rational creatures, the gratification of it is ſought after as one of the higheſt enjoyments of life. The ſame paſſion that impels us to ſociety, impels us to take part with our companions in their intereſts and inclinations. Inſenſibly and without thought we fall into their cuſtoms and their manners; we adopt their ſentiments, their paſſions, and even their foibles, and follow the ſame courſe as if we were actuated by the ſame ſpirit. This principle appears in children even in the infant ſtate. From their earlieſt years they love to mimic whatever ſtrikes the organs of ſenſe; and ſoon as the young idea begins to ſhoot, and the embryo of the manly character to appear, they form themſelves inſenſibly upon the model of their parents, and the perſons with whom they converſe. To this, and not to any fancied phyſical cauſe, is owing that ſtrong and ſtriking reſemblance, which we frequently find between the parents and the offspring; a reſemblance as remarkable in the temper and character, as in the features of the face.

This principle is not confined to individuals, it

extends to nations. There is a national character, a national ſpirit, and even a national mode of thinking, down the current of which we are inſenſibly carried. When any novelty, any improvement in art or in ſcience, makes its appearance in a nation, it flies from man to man, and from place to place by a kind of contagion, till it has overſpread the whole country. So powerful is ſympathy, and the love of imitation among men: and thus are our minds framed by the hand of our Maker, to accord with thoſe of others; like the ſtrings of muſical inſtruments in uniſon, when one is ſtruck, the reſt correſpond to the impreſſion, vibrate in the ſame key, and ſound the ſame note. As this principle is implanted in us by the Author of our nature, it muſt no doubt be intended for great and important purpoſes. It ſerves to ſtrengthen the bonds of ſociety, to promote friendſhip and love, and is the apteſt and moſt ſucceſsful means, not only to teach wiſdom and goodneſs, but alſo to inſpire them.

But as all principles have their unfavourable and vitious extreme, to which they may be carried, ſo likewiſe hath this. Here, therefore, hath the Almighty interpoſed, and ſet bounds to it which it ought not to paſs, and on the fartheſt verge of innocence hath engraven this inſcription, "Hitherto "ſhalt thou come, and no farther; here ſhall the "progreſs of thy imitation be ſtayed;" or, as it is expreſſed in the words of our text, "Thou ſhalt "not imitate men in their wickedneſs; thou ſhalt "not follow a multitude to do evil."

In further treating on this ſubject, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, endeavour to ſhow you by what means

we are to keep ourſelves from following a multitude to do evil; and, in the *ſecond* place, adduce ſome arguments that urge the neceſſity of this duty.

The *firſt* thing propoſed, was to ſhow you by what means we are to guard ourſelves from the multitude that do evil.

And, in the *firſt* place, In order to this, let us be early and firmly eſtabliſhed in the principles of our holy faith. When we look about us into life, and behold how many perſons enter into the world, without having their minds inſtructed, or their hearts eſtabliſhed in the great principles of virtue and religion, we cannot be ſurpriſed that they go aſtray on occaſion of the firſt temptation, and follow the multitude to do evil. Perhaps they have acquired ſome general knowledge of Chriſtianity, but their knowledge of it is merely ſpeculative, has played round the head, but has not reached the heart. Accordingly, as mere ſpeculation is utterly unfit to combat the ſtrength of paſſion, and the violence of temptation, they ſoon fall off and ſink into all the corruptions of the world around them. This courſe of life is well deſcribed in the beautiful parable of the ſower and the ſeed.—"Behold a ſower went "forth to ſow; and as he ſowed, ſome ſeeds fell "upon the ſtony places, where they had not much "earth, and forthwith they ſprung up, becauſe they "had no deepneſs of earth; and when the ſun was "up they were ſcorched, and becauſe they had no "root, they withered away." That is, they had received the knowledge of the Chriſtian religion, but they had not attained to that true faith, which is not barely an aſſent of the underſtanding to ſpecu-

lative truth, but which is alſo a principle of action which purifies the heart, works by love, and regulates the whole converſation.

It is education chiefly that forms the human character; and it is a virtuous and religious education that forms the character of the Chriſtian. The mind, at that early and innocent period, being untainted with actual guilt, and all alive to every generous impreſſion, bends without labour to the force of inſtruction; is eaſily formed to all the beauties of holineſs, and by frequent and repeated acts, acquires habits of devotion and virtue. The principles that are then imbibed, and the habits that are then acquired, although they may be ſometimes ſhaken and weakened by the contagion of evil example, are ſeldom or never entirely obliterated. When the good ſeed is thus ſown, we have the promiſe of Almighty God, that he will grant it the increaſe, and cauſe it to ſpring up into everlaſting life. When the Chriſtian doctrines are thus received, not merely as articles of belief, but alſo as principles of action, through the bleſſing of God, they will attain the aſcendant over the unruly paſſions, and exert ſuch an entire influence over the mind, as will enable it to reſiſt temptation, and to come off triumphant. When the good foundation is thus laid, the winds may ariſe, and the rains may deſcend; the tempeſt may blow and beat upon the houſe, but the foundation of the ſtructure ſhall not fail, for it reſts upon a rock.

Next, In order to preſerve our innocence and integrity uncorrupted from the world, let us beware with what company we aſſociate. Evil communica-

tion corrupts good manners. It is not indeed always in our power to avoid falling into the company of the wicked, but it is always in our power not to make ſuch perſons our confidents and companions. It is the grand ſecret of life, both with reſpect to virtue and to happineſs, to ſelect good and worthy perſons to be our friends and companions; ſuch perſons with whom we would not only wiſh to live, but alſo deſire to die. Such perſons whom we would not only chooſe to be the companions of our careleſs hours, but alſo the partners of our enjoyments through all eternity.

There is ſomething in the friendſhip and familiarity of good men, extremely great and honorable to human nature; and there are ſome conſiderations in Chriſtianity that carry theſe to their higheſt perfection. The great commandment of our Lord to his followers, was to love one another. In the holy ſacrament of the ſupper, we are united together in ſuch intimate bonds of union, as to become members of one body. We have one faith, one hope, one baptiſm, one Lord, the Father of all, one Saviour who died for the ſins of the world, one Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the faithful. We are fellow heirs of the ſame grace of life, fellow expectants of the ſame heavenly rewards.

Under theſe conſiderations, the friendſhip of good men would be attended with the moſt beneficial effects. They would ſupport each other in the temptations and afflictions of life, and by quickening each other's diligence, provoke one another to love and to good works. Such aſſociations of good and worthy perſons, in times of public degeneracy and

corruption, are ſpoken of in Scripture with the higheſt honor. "Then they that feared the Lord, ſpake "often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and "heard it; and a book of remembrance was writ"ten before him for them that feared the Lord, "and that thought upon his name. And they ſhall "be mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, in that day "when I make up my jewels; and I will ſpare "them as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth "him."

Further, In order to keep ourſelves unſpotted from the world, let us acquire firmneſs and fortitude of mind. There is no principle in human nature that is attended with a train of more dreadful conſequences, than that facility of manners, that ſimplicity of diſpoſition, that weakneſs of ſoul, which is eaſily perſuaded from its reſolution, to comply with every propoſal. This good nature, as it is falſely called, is the worſt nature in the world, and is the occaſion of more calamities, and of more crimes, than the actual inclination to wickedneſs. To oppoſe the actual vitious inclination, Almighty God hath indued us with an underſtanding to diſcern its evil, and with a conſcience to check its progreſs; but this pernicious feebleneſs of mind has the appearance of ſociableneſs and of virtue, and, by that appearance, deceives us to our ruin.

Perſons of ſuch a character make no original efforts of mind. They ſeem born to enliſt under a leader, and are the ſinners or the ſaints of accident. Fortitude of mind, and ſtrength of reſolution, are requiſite for every purpoſe of human life. In particular, they are neceſſary to keep us from the com-

tagion of evil example. Let us be cautious in laying down reſolutions: let us be cautious in concerting plans of action: but when we have once reſolved, let us be immutable. When we have choſen our path, let us hold on, though the temptations of life ſhould beſet us on one hand, and the terrors of death on the other, not ſuffering the commotions of the world, nor even the changes of nature, to ſhake or to diſturb the more ſtedfaſt purpoſe of our ſouls. The moſt valuable of all poſſeſſions is a ſtrenuous and a ſteady mind, a ſelf-deciding ſpirit, prepared to act, to ſuffer, or to die, as occaſion requires.

This is not an ideal character, which exiſts only in deſcription. God hath never wanted his thouſands who have not bowed the knee to the idols of the world. We can reckon up a venerable company of Patriarchs, and a ſacred ſociety of Prophets, a holy fellowſhip of Apoſtles, an innumerable army of Martyrs and Confeſſors, who were found faithful in the midſt of the faithleſs, who approved themſelves the ſons of God without rebuke, in the midſt of an evil and profane generation, and having received the recompence of reward, are now ſitting on thrones, and ſinging Hoſannah in the heavens.

The contemplation of their lives ſhould animate us to run the race that is ſet before us, with the ſame alacrity and zeal. Did we frequently and ſeriouſly call up to our remembrance, the lives and the virtues of thoſe who are now inheriting the promiſes. Did we, by faith and contemplation, repreſent to our minds thoſe unſeen rewards of which they are now in poſſeſſion, we ſhould feel our hearts

burn within us; with zeal and emulation, we would inhale a portion of the ſame divine ſpirit, and beholding as in a glaſs reflected, their virtues and victories, we would be changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the living God.

Cætera deſunt.

N. B. The Sermon which was delivered in its finiſhed ſtate, by the Author, from this Text, was much admired by his hearers. The above is only a part of it, and a firſt copy.

SERMON XXIX.

PSALM CXXII. 6.

Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem.

FELLOW-CITIZENS, we now aſſemble, in obedience to the command of our Sovereign, to pray for the peace of Jeruſalem, and for the proſperity of thoſe that love her. Loyalty to our king, and love to our country, are the paſſions which ought to animate us on this day*. That attachment which good citizens bear to their country, has ever been eſteemed a virtue of the higheſt claſs. Not to mention the Greeks and the Romans, the hiſtory of the Iſraelites, with which you are better acquainted, preſents us with grand and ſtriking inſtances of patriotiſm and public ſpirit. They never mention the names of Zion and Jeruſalem, without gladneſs and rapture. The words which I have now read to you, ſeem to have come from the heart, and breathe this ſpirit in the moſt lively manner.

During their captivity, when they ſat by the rivers of Babylon, the Jews thought upon Zion, and wept. When they prayed to Heaven, they turned their faces towards Jeruſalem. At their return from captivity, they are deſcribed as halting on a hill, over which they had to march, taking a fond look of Judea, from which they had been baniſhed ſo long; burſting into tears at the view, weeping as they went

* Upon a faſt-day during the American war.

forward, at the recogniſance of their ancient country, and their native land. Our Saviour, who was a pattern of all goodneſs, ſet us an example of this virtue. He loved his country, and uttered that celebrated exclamation of patriotiſm, "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, "How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen "gathereth her brood under her wings!"

As we now meet to pray for the peace or welfare of our Jeruſalem, (for in the language of Scripture, peace is put for all kinds of proſperity,) I ſhall endeavour to ſhow you at this time, wherein the public welfare conſiſts.

It conſiſts in the national liberty, the national wealth and induſtry, the national defence, and the national character.

The *firſt* ingredient in the public happineſs is liberty; a privilege invaluable, but frequently miſunderſtood, and ſtill more frequently abuſed. Abſolute liberty to do what we pleaſe, is abſolute power. If one alone, or a few poſſeſs this, the reſt are in ſlavery; if all have it, the whole muſt be in confuſion. In order to prevent mutual encroachments, and aſcertain each perſon's claims, liberty muſt be ſecured by a conſtitution, and guarded by law. In the ſtate of nature, men are not only free, but independent; among the wandering tribes of ſavages, none claim authority over others; but as ſuch a ſtate cannot ſubſiſt long, whenever men enter into formed ſociety, they give up ſome of their natural rights, in order to preſerve the reſt; they no longer wield the ſword of juſtice themſelves; it is given to the magiſtrate; they intruſt their property to the laws, and their protection to the king.

Still, however, that is the happieſt form of government, which beſt ſecures the natural rights of men. It is here that the Britiſh conſtitution triumphs. Poſſeſſing advantages which no other form of government ever poſſeſſed, it ſtands forth the envy of the neighbouring nations, and a pattern to ſucceeding times. Liberty is the birthright of every Briton. That grand charter of Nature to her children is eſtabliſhed and confirmed by law. The conſtitution, like the providence of Heaven, extends its gracious regards to all; while it protects the poor in the poſſeſſion of their legal rights, it checks the inſolence of the great, and ſets bounds to the prerogative of Majeſty itſelf, ſaying to the king, "Thus "far, and no farther, does thy power extend." All the members of the ſtate are repreſented in the great council of the nation, and have a voice in the Legiſlature; the ſubjects are taxed by their own conſent. There is no deſpotic or diſcretionary power in any part of the conſtitution. No action muſt be deemed a crime, but what the laws have plainly determined to be ſuch; no crime muſt be imputed to a man, but from a legal proof before his judges; and theſe judges muſt be his fellow-ſubjects and his peers, who are obliged, by their own intereſt, to have a watchful eye over encroachments and violence. "We "muſt ever admire as a maſterpiece of political wiſ- "dom, and as the key-ſtone of civil liberty, that ſtat- "ute which forces the ſecrets of every priſon to be re- "vealed, the cauſe of every commitment to be declar- "ed, and the perſon of the accuſed to be produced, "that he may claim his enlargement, or his trial, "within a limited time." By theſe means, Great

Britain hath become what ancient patriots wiſhed, a government of laws, and not of men. Highly favoured nation and happy people, if they knew their felicity, and did not upon occaſions, by their own fault, turn the greateſt of civil bleſſings into a curſe!

In the *ſecond* place, the national welfare conſiſts in the national induſtry and wealth. It is a vulgar error to ſuppoſe, that the greatneſs of a nation depends upon the number of its inhabitants. It is not the number of the people, but their being uſefully employed, that adds to the true grandeur and felicity of a ſtate. A nation is a great family, where every member has a ſphere marked out and a part to perform, and which, if it abounds with the idle, muſt fall to ruin. "Men crowd where the ſituation is tempting, and multiply according to the means of ſubſiſtence." Preſent the proper objects; let the mechanic arts be cultivated; let manufactures abound, and commerce flouriſh; and citizens will come from the eaſt and from the weſt, and from the ſouth and from the north. Every thing in the world is purchaſed by labour and by induſtry.

Our paſſions and deſires are the cauſes of labour and induſtry. When a nation introduces manufactures and commerce, new deſires are created, and new paſſions are raiſed; men increaſe the enjoyments, and refine upon the pleaſures of life. Not ſatisfied with what is *neceſſary*, which is a vague term, and has a reference to the fancy, and to the habit of living, they look out for what is comfortable, what is elegant, and what is delicate in life. In order to ſupply theſe recent wants, the poſſeſſor of land, the manufacturer, and the merchant, redouble their la-

bour and attention. Thus new induſtry is excited, greater numbers of men are employed, the grandeur of the ſovereign, and the happineſs of the ſtate, come to coincide. By this means, a ſtock of labour comes to be laid up for public uſe.

Trade and induſtry are in reality nothing but a ſtock of labour, which, in times of peace and tranquillity, are employed for the eaſe and ſatisfaction of individuals; but in the exigencies of ſtate, may in part be turned to public advantage. The cultivation of theſe arts is favoured, and forwarded in our country, by that ſecurity which we enjoy. What every man has, is his own. The voice of the oppreſſor is never heard in our ſtreets. The hand of rapacious power is never ſtretched out to rob the induſtrious of the fruit of his labour.

Thirdly, The public welfare conſiſts in the national defence. The police of every well-modelled ſtate has a reference to war and to national ſafety. The legiſlator of Sparta, one of the moſt famous of the ancient republics, thought that nations were by nature in a ſtate of hoſtility; he took his meaſures accordingly, and obſerving that all the poſſeſſions of the vanquiſhed pertain to the victor, he held it ridiculous to propoſe any benefit to his country, before he had provided that it ſhould not be conquered. A moſt neceſſary proviſion; for unleſs a ſtate be ſufficient for its own defence, it muſt fall an eaſy prey to every invader. It was the intention of nature, that nations, as well as men, ſhould guard themſelves. Hence leſſons of war are delivered in Sacred Scripture, and principles of emulation and diſſenſion are ſtrongly implanted in the ſoul of man. Human na-

ture has no part of its character, of which more ſtriking examples are given in every part of the globe. What is it that ſtirs in the breaſts of ordinary men when the enemies of their country are named? Whence are the prejudices that ſubſiſt between different provinces and villages of the ſame empire and territory? What is it that excites one half of the nations of Europe againſt the other? The ſtateſman may explain this conduct upon motives of national jealouſy and caution; but the people have diſlikes and antipathies, which proceed from ſentiment, not from reaſoning. Among them the materials of war and diſſenſion are laid without the direction of government, and ſparks are ready on every occaſion to kindle into a flame.

This being the diſpoſition of the people, happy is that inſtitution which prevails in a part of this iſland*, of putting arms into the hands of the people, of making every citizen a ſoldier in his turn, and by this means having a force at hand to riſe in arms at any ſudden emergency. When ſuch a ſyſtem of military arrangements takes place, the proſperity of a ſtate becomes independent of ſingle men; there is a wiſdom which never dies, and a valour which is immortal. A ſtate may hire troops, but valour is not to be bought; the wealth of a nation will procure ſoldiers to fight its battles, but let it not be forgotten, that the poſſeſſions of the fearful are eaſily ſeized, that a timorous multitude falls into rout of itſelf. Ramparts may be erected, and the implements of war may be furniſhed, by a pacific people; but let it be remembered as an eternal truth, that

* Originally publiſhed before the inſtitution of the Scottiſh Militia.

there is no rampart which is impregnable to valour, that arms are only of conſequence when they are in the hands of the brave, and that the only price of freedom is the blood of the free. When an ancient Spartan was aſked what was the wall of his city? he pointed to a band of brave men; a defence more permanent and more effectual than the rock and the cement with which other cities are fortified.

Laſtly, The public welfare conſiſts in the national character. That righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach, but alſo a depreſſion to any people, are truths ſo univerſally received, as to require little confirmation. All lawgivers in all ages have thought ſo, and made it their object to cultivate juſtice and temperance, and fortitude and induſtry, conſcious that public virtue is the ſource of public happineſs. Philoſophers and moraliſts have been of the ſame opinion, and have taught, with one conſent, that the morality of the people was the ſtability of the government, and the true ſource of public proſperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of theſe ſpeculations. If we conſult the hiſtory of the moſt renowned nations that have made a figure in the world, we ſhall find, that they roſe to greatneſs by virtue, and ſunk to nothing by vice; that they obtained dominion by their temperance, their probity of manners, and a ſerious regard to religion; and that when they grew diſſolute, corrupted and profane, they became ſlaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political conſtitution is broken, it is haſtening to its decline.

When internal ſymptoms of weakneſs appear, the leaſt external violence will accompliſh its diſſolution. Beſides the natural tendency of virtue to make nations great and happy, if we have juſt notions of divine Providence, if we believe that the perfections of God are at all concerned in human affairs, virtuous nations will be his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection; he will counſel their counſellors, cover their armies in the day of battle, and crown them with victory and peace.

SERMON XXX.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

It is appointed to men once to die; but after this the judgment.

DEATH is the concluſion of all events; of all that ever have been, and of all that ever will be. The ſchemes of the baſe, the plots of the ambitious, the projects of the viſionary, the ſtudies of the learned, all terminate here. However different the paths be that we take in life, they all lead to the grave. Whilſt, therefore, we make death the ſubject of contemplation, and meditate upon the houſe which is appointed for all living, let us take this thought along with us, that we ſhall bear a part in thoſe ſcenes which we now deſcribe, and that we are meditating on a fate which will one day be our own.

In the *firſt* place, Let us conſider death as an event, the period of which is uncertain.

In the days when Noah entered into the ark, they did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage; and the flood came, and deſtroyed them all. On the day that Lot went out of Sodom, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they ſold, they planted, they builded; and it rained fire and brimſtone from heaven, and deſtroyed them all. As it was in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, even thus, my friends, ſhall it be to you when the day of death cometh. In the preſent ſtate of things, the

ſoul of man is blind to futurity. Surrounded with material objects, and occupied in preſent affairs, we make theſe the ſole objects of attention; we find in them the only ſources of attachment, and overlook thoſe ſpiritual and diſtant events on which our future life and happineſs depend. Hence, we are always ſurpriſed with our latter end, and the day of the Lord cometh like a thief in the night. No inſtruction can make us ſo wiſe as to conſider our latter end; no warning can incite us to ſet our houſes in order, that we may die; and no example give the alarm ſo ſtrong, as to ſet us on ſerious preparation for meeting with God. Void of thought, and careleſs of futurity, we live on from day to day, like the victim that plays and dances before that altar where its blood is to be ſhed. Even after the longeſt life, and under the moſt lingering ſickneſs, death comes unexpected; the arrow is ſtill unſeen that ſtrikes through the heart.

This is not peculiar to a few men; it deſcribes a general character, and is exemplified in all the claſſes of life. This infatuation does not ariſe from ignorance. You all know that death is certain; you all know that it is generally unexpected. You aſſent to every thing that we can ſay upon this head, that there is no action of life, but what may lead to its end, and no moment of time but what may be your laſt. You need not be informed, that death ſpares no age; your own obſervation preſents you with many inſtances of perſons cut off in all periods of life. In that church-yard you ſee graves of every length; on thoſe monuments of mortality, you read the hiſtories of the promiſing boy, of the blooming

youth, of the man in middle life, and of the hoary head, mingled together in ſad aſſemblage amongſt the abodes of the dead. You can reckon up inſtances of perſons cut off in a ſudden and unexpected manner; of a Herod who was ſtruck amidſt the applauſes of the people; of a Jezebel who was thrown headlong from that window where ſhe had prepared to diſplay herſelf to the people; of a Belſhazzar who was ſlain at a banquet, when he was carouſing with his princes, his concubines, and his wives; and of a Holophernes, who met his fate ſurrounded with his army, and crowned with victory and fame.

With all theſe in your memory, you act as if you were *immortal*. Even the death of thoſe who fall around us, and before our eyes, affects us not with ſerious concern. One perſon oppoſed us in a favourite object, and we rejoice at his deceaſe; another ſtood in our way to preferment and power; the death of a third opens to us a proſpect of riſing to wealth and fortune: we profit not by all theſe leſſons of mortality; the voice from the tomb ſends us back to the world, and from the very aſhes of the dead there comes a fire that rekindles our earthly deſires. We look upon all our neighbours as mortal; we form ſchemes to ourſelves upon their deceaſe, but forget all the while that we ourſelves are to die. O fooliſh and infatuated race, will you always continue deaf to the voice of wiſdom? Will neither the inſtructions of the living, nor the warnings of the dead, induce you to ſerious thoughts? Will you continue to lengthen your proſpects, when perhaps you ſtand upon the very verge of life; and can you enjoy the feaſt, when the ſword hangs over

your head, by a ſingle hair? Who knoweth what a day may bring forth? The morning has ſmiled upon multitudes, who before the evening have ſlept the ſleep of death. Who knoweth how ſoon you may be hurried to the judgment-ſeat of God? The ears which hear theſe ſayings may ſoon be ſhut for ever; and the heart which now throbs at the thought, may, in a little time, be mingled with the clods of the valley. Some who laſt Lord's day worſhipped within theſe walls, are now gone to the eternal world, and God only knows how ſoon ſome of us may follow.

Seeing then that life is ſo uncertain, that the thread thereof breaks at every blaſt, let me exhort you to ſet apart ſome time for ſerious meditation upon your mortality. Let it be on ſome ſolemn occaſion, in the ſilent hour of night, when deep ſleep falleth on man, when midnight cloſeth awful all the world, and naught in nature is awake but God and thee: there, in deep and ſolemn meditation, think over the terrors of that houſe which is appointed for all living, and with the ancient patriarch, ſay to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my ſiſter. Aſk ſeriouſly at your own heart, "Should theſe eyes never open upon the light of another day; ſhould the awful mandate iſſue forth from the Almighty Arbiter of life and death,—This night, this night thy ſoul ſhall be required of thee;" could you, without fear and trembling, face the tribunal of God, the Judge of all? If frighted nature ſtarts back and trembles at the thought of inſtant diſſolution, make your former life paſs before you in review, compare it with the law of God: if your former miſpent time

comes up before you in ſad remembrance; if your paſt tranſgreſſions ſtare you in the face, and point to the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, inſtantly and without delay, whilſt the gate of heaven is yet open, whilſt the throne of mercy is yet acceſſible, proſtrate yourſelves before God in deep humility and abaſement, mourn over the ſins of your paſt life in bitterneſs of ſoul, believe in a crucified Redeemer, who died for the ſins of the world, implore compaſſion and forgiveneſs from the Father of mercies, through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt. Thus continue fervent in prayer and ſupplication, and in the exerciſe of faith and repentance; give not ſleep to your eyes nor ſlumber to your eye-lids, till you have made your peace with God, till you feel within yourſelves that peace which paſſeth all underſtanding, that joy which is unſpeakable and glorious. Thus continue at ſolemn and ſtated occaſions, to conſider your latter end, till death ſhall grow familiar to your mind, till the grave ſhall gradually loſe its terrors, and the Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſe upon you in full glory.

In the *ſecond* place, Let me remind you, that a good life is the beſt preparation for death. You may lay it down as a maxim confirmed by univerſal experience, that every man dies as he lives; and it is by the general tenor of the life, not a particular frame of mind at the hour of death, that we are to be judged at the tribunal of God. It is a dangerous miſtake which prevails amongſt men, that it is ſufficient for their eternal happineſs, if they feel ſome ſerious emotions at their latter end. If your life has been wicked, what will it avail you, that on your

death-bed you have been actuated with ſorrow for your offences? Judas Iſcariot felt ſuch a ſorrow when he went to his own place. Late converſions are not to be truſted to, and death-bed repentances are generally nothing more than the firſt gnawing of the worm that ſhall never die. Suppoſe death to halt a little, the ſick perſon recovers, waſhes his couch with floods of penitential tears, a thouſand vows of amendment are made; but if repentance laſts no longer than ſickneſs, the diſeaſe and the devotion go off together; the man returns to walk in his former ways.

Be blameleſs, therefore, and harmleſs in the general tenor of your life. Keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man. Let not the ſun go down upon one unrepented ſin. Make it your buſineſs every night to review the actions of the foregoing day. If, through the frailty of nature, or the force of temptation, you have ſinned againſt God, proſtrate yourſelves before the throne of grace, aſk pardon through Chriſt. As you would not wiſh to yourſelves diſtreſs and anguiſh and tribulation at the day of death; as you would not wiſh to bring down your gray hairs with ſorrow to the grave; beware of perſiſting in a courſe of unrepented ſin.

Notwithſtanding, however, of the utility of ſuch meditations, there is no ſubject on which we are ſo reluctant to fix our attention as our mortality. We ſhift from one ſpeculation, and from one purſuit to another; we give our thoughts to wander through immenſity, but cautiouſly avoid this theme which touches us ſo near; but this is the point where wiſdom begins. We can never live as we ought, till

we have learned how to die. I mean not by this, that we ſhould make death the conſtant ſubject of our meditation, and have funerals always paſſing before our eyes. This would withdraw us from life altogether; would indiſpoſe us even for its buſineſs and its enjoyments; but although we cannot always employ ourſelves in ſuch meditations, let us at times give this ſubject its full weight; that certainly merits ſome place in our thought which is the great cloſe of our being here. It is awful, indeed, I acknowledge, my friends, to make approaches to the manſions of the dead; it is melancholy to think upon the fall of this goodly ſtructure, which was built by the hand of the Moſt High; but fall it aſſuredly muſt. The preſent moment haſtens us on to our laſt hour. Let us therefore prepare for an event which we cannot avoid. We may learn ſome leſſons from the tomb, which will avail us through all eternity.

In the *third* place, I ſhall conſider death as becoming preſent to us, and endeavour to give you that view of it, which you will one day have.

None, indeed, ever returned from the inviſible world to deſcribe the bed of death, and tell us the agonies of the laſt hour. But up to that hour we can trace the man, and ſurvey him ſtretched upon the bed from which he is to riſe no more. A death-bed diſcovers the real character of men; diſſimulation is then at an end. At the cloſe of the ſcene, the maſk drops off, and the man appears in his true colours. Then, then, often for the firſt time, a man turns a ſerious eye upon himſelf; cut off from all connexion with the living world; bidding adieu for ever to all below the ſun; entering within the dominions of the

dead, and about to appear before the judgment-ſeat of God; ſurrounded by the ſad circle of his friends and attendants, he reads in their trembling looks, that all is over with him, that his hour is come; then the illuſion vaniſhes that was ſpread upon all earthly things; then the paſt riſes up, often riſes in bitter remembrance; then the future ruſhes upon his view with all its dark and unknown terrors; then the ſenſe of Deity revives, which, however diſguiſed, lies at the bottom of every heart; then conſcience, riſing up in majeſty ſupreme, holds out ſuch a picture of the eternal world, as convinces the moſt unbelieving mind, convinces him, that a future ſtate is not the dictate of a wild imagination, is not the figment of prieſts and lawgivers, to terrify the ignorant, and keep the people in awe; he ſees and feels that it is an awful reality. When the time of his departure is announced by the cold ſweat and the ſhivering limbs, and the voice faltering in the throat, he caſts a laſt look, perhaps a ſad one, on all that he leaves behind. Then the whole creation fades from his view, the world ſeems to be diſſolved, and, to the cloſing eye, nothing appears but God alone; that God, before whoſe tribunal he is ſummoned to appear.

If this fate ſhall one day be ours, what manner of perſons ought we now to be? At that hour, the very beſt ſhall wiſh that they had been better, and after all the preparation that we have made, we ſhall wiſh that we had made more. Let this thought have its influence in determining us to the choice of objects which we purſue, and the courſe of life which we embrace. The greateſt part of mankind, having no

fixed or certain plan of life, have no choice in the objects which preſent themſelves, but give the looſe rein to a wandering inclination, and follow on without thinking, where accident points the way. Here, therefore, let us often pauſe, and ſeriouſly aſk ourſelves, Is the courſe of life which I am now engaged in, of ſuch a nature that it will bear a review upon the bed of death? Are the motives of my preſent conduct, and the reaſons which now determine me to action, ſo ſtrong and well founded, that I could plead them in my defence at the bar of eternal juſtice? If that is not the caſe, conſider and be wiſe before it is too late. Why ſhould you vex yourſelves in vain? Why ſhould you paſs your time in ſuch a manner, as to make its end bitter? Why will you treaſure up to yourſelves anguiſh and remorſe and tribulation, and make no other uſe of the preſent time, but to embitter your laſt hour? Be conſiſtent with yourſelves. You cannot live the life of the wicked, and die the death of the righteous. Let, therefore, your courſe of action be of that kind, that draws no repentance after it; then ſhall your path in life be like the morning light, which ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Having thus ſet out, and made progreſs in the ways of righteouſneſs, you will look forward with joy. This will cauſe the evening of your days to ſmile, and the ſtream of life to run clear to the laſt. Let this conſideration moderate our attachment to earthly things. What profit hath a man in that ſore travel to which he is appointed under the ſun? Why ſhould we vex ourſelves in vain, deny ourſelves to the enjoyments of life, withdraw ſleep from our eyes,

and peace from our minds? Why ſhould we add to the evils of life, and carry about with us a burden to the grave? Even with a view to preſent tranquillity and enjoyment, this is folly of the firſt magnitude; but, when we take in the conſideration of a future life, it is worſe than folly, it is ſin. If we are entirely immerſed in the concerns of this world; if earthly things occupy and engroſs our whole attention, what ſhall we do when God taketh away the ſoul? How will the cloſing eye contemplate the pomp and glitter of life, the evil of avarice, the buſtling of ambition, and all this circle of vanity to which we are now enchanted? Uſe this world, therefore, as not abuſing it; let not the buſineſs or the pleaſures of it take hold of your heart, make them not eſſential to your happineſs, ſit looſe to them, remember that the faſhion of this world paſſeth away, and that death ſoon puts a period to the ſcene, which no wiſe man would wiſh to laſt for ever.

In the *fourth* place, By making the thought of death preſent to us, let us regulate our conduct with reſpect to the friendſhips which we form, and concerning the animoſities which we entertain.

Affection and friendſhip are the beſt and moſt valuable part of human nature. The heart of man wiſhes to be kind, and looks around for objects. This fund of generous love is often miſapplied; this favourable bias of humanity is often perverted; ſometimes by that general and indiſcriminate good nature which looks upon all men as alike; ſometimes by frivolous attachments, founded upon a conformity of trifling diſpoſitions; and ſometimes by a more criminal alliance, by a partnerſhip in iniquity. In

the courſe of buſineſs, indeed, we muſt converſe with perſons of all kinds. No man has the choice of the companies into which he may fall; but every man has the choice of the friends with whom he cultivates more intimate connexions. In forming theſe connexions, therefore, let us look forward to the time when they ſhall be diſſolved, and let us live only with ſuch perſons with whom we would deſire to die.

This thought ſhould alſo check us in the animoſities which we are apt to entertain. In the preſent ſtate of things, where men think ſo differently, where oppoſite paſſions are felt, and interfering intereſts occur, diſſenſions will naturally ariſe. And, where men have not the aid of philoſophy to reſtrain, or the influence of divine grace to ſubdue their paſſions, theſe will often be attended with diſmal effects. From this root proceeds the wormwood which embitters the cup of human life. But when the blood begins to cool, when the paſſions grow calmer, reaſon reaſſumes its office, greater moderation will prevail; things will appear in a different light; honeſt and candid men will then look back with pain upon thoſe exceſſes to which they have been carried by the impetuoſity of paſſion. However ſome men chooſe to live, all men would wiſh to die at peace with their neighbours; there is no enmity in the grave; there is no diſcord in the houſe which is appointed for all living: there friends and foes reſt together in peace, and the aſhes of thoſe who were mortal enemies, mingle together in friendly alliance. Let us, therefore, now cultivate thoſe benevolent diſpoſitions to all men, and live in thoſe habits with our neighbours,

which we would wiſh to prevail in us at the hour of death.

Theſe exhortations, my young friends, I addreſs particularly to you. You are apt to reckon yourſelves privileged from death; you put the evil day far off; you promiſe to yourſelves a length of happy days, and think that melancholy reflections upon mortality, are ill ſuited to the bloom of your years, and the gaiety of your ſpirits. "Let the old," you ſay, "think upon death; let thoſe who are "drawing nigh to the grave, prepare for that better "world to which they are advancing; but ſure it is "the duty of the young and the gay to make the "moſt of life." True; and in order to make the moſt of life, you muſt conquer the fear of death. The king of terrors, when not ſubdued, is the moſt formidable of all foes. In every path of life he will meet you, and haunt you like a ghoſt: even at the banquet his form will appear; he will blaſt you in the midſt of your joy, and turn the houſe of mirth into a houſe of mourning. Truſt not, O man, to thy youth, nor preſume upon impunity from the deſtroyer. How often, when the tree puts forth buds, and ſpreads its bloſſoms to the ſun, does the wind of the deſert come and blaſt the hopes of the year! The widow of Nain wept over her ſon, who died, fair in the prime of life; and many a parent hath followed his child to the grave, crying with bitter lamentation, "Would to God that I had died for thee, my ſon! "my ſon!" Your own experience may enforce this truth. None who now hear me, but have ſeen their equals in age cut off, and younger than they laid in the grave. As, therefore, you are always in danger,

be always on your guard. Inſtead of filling you with gloom and melancholy, this is the true way to prevent them. Having ſubdued the laſt enemy, you have none other to fear. Adopted into the family of God, intereſted in the merits of Chriſt, entitled to the glories of immortality, you go forward through life and death, conquering and to conquer. Then all things are yours; death is a paſſage to a better life, and the gate to immortality.

Much more is it incumbent on you, my aged friends, to conſider your latter end. Why ſtand you here all the day idle? Conſider how vain, and fooliſh, and ſinful, it is to be forming ſchemes of long life, when you are within the threſhold of the houſe of death? Conſider how terrible will be the hour, if you have never thought of death till you come to die; like Jonah, to be awakened from a ſound ſleep, and to be caſt into the ocean. Look into life, behold a young generation riſing around you, and you yourſelves left alone in a new world. Look into the records of mortality, into the repoſitories of the dead, and hear your equals in age calling to you from the tomb, and warning you to prepare for that fate which is theirs today, and may be yours tomorrow. Embrace, therefore, the opportunities of grace which you now enjoy. Whilſt the Prince of Peace extends the golden ſceptre, kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from his preſence. Be wiſe, and conſider your end that is ſo near.

SERMON XXXI.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

My yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light.

JESUS hath lately been addreſſing to you the gracious invitation which here he gives to penitent ſinners. With his invitation you have teſtified your compliance. Laſt Lord's day you confeſſed at theſe tables, that you were weary and heavy laden with the yoke of the world; that you came to Jeſus in hopes of finding reſt to your ſouls; and that you were reſolved to learn of him, and to take his yoke upon you. The good confeſſion, my friends, which you then witneſſed, the happy choice which you then made, you will never have cauſe to repent. The world, indeed, will repreſent religion to you as a heavy burden and a galling yoke; but I aſſure you, upon the authority of Jeſus Chriſt, and upon the teſtimony of all his diſciples, that his yoke is eaſy, and his burden is light; that his commandments are not grievous, and the ways he points out to his followers, are ways of pleaſantneſs and paths of peace.

The eaſe and pleaſure of the chriſtian life, is to be the ſubject of the preſent diſcourſe. But, before I enter upon it, I have one obſervation to make, which is, That in order to taſte the joys of religion, we muſt have been accuſtomed to its government, and made advances in the divine life. We can never have a taſte for any purſuit till we be acquainted with

it: we can never enter into the ſpirit of any ſcience, till that ſcience be familiar to us. To thoſe who have long engaged in a courſe of wickedneſs, the duties of religion will at firſt be grievous and irkſome, becauſe they oppoſe ſtrong prejudices and confirmed habits of vice. But when theſe bad habits are removed, and good ones are contracted, when a man acquires the temper and enters into the ſpirit of religion, he then feels the joy which a ſtranger intermeddles not with. Give a muſical inſtrument to an unſkilful perſon, we hear nothing but harſhneſs and diſcord from every ſtring: the artiſt alone makes muſic and harmony accompany all the motions of his hand. Religion is an art, and like an art is to be learned before it be underſtood.

In the *firſt* place, The Chriſtian life is a life of eaſe and pleaſure, on account of the principle from which the Chriſtian acts.

The Chriſtian is not a ſlave who obeys from compulſion, nor a ſervant who works for hire; he is a ſon who acts from ingenuous affection and filial love. When the chriſtian contemplates the goodneſs, and tender mercies, and loving-kindneſs of God, particularly his inexpreſſible love in the redemption of the world by Chriſt Jeſus, he is conſtrained to new obedience, by the moſt powerful of all ties, by the cords of love, and the bands of a man; thus reaſoning, and thus feeling, that if one died for all, then they which are alive ought not to live to themſelves, but to him who died for them. Gratitude to a benefactor, affection to a father, love to a friend, all concur to form the principle of evangelical obedience, and to ſtrengthen the cord that is not eaſily broken.

Love, then, is the principle of the Chriſtian life: love; the moſt generous paſſion that glows in the breaſt of man, the moſt active principle that works in the human frame, the key that unlocks every finer feeling of the heart, the ſpring that puts in motion every power of the ſoul. Pleaſant are the labours of love. Short is the path and cheerful the journey when the heart goes along. A determined mind, enamoured of the object it purſues, removes mountains, and makes the crooked path ſtraight: the fire cannot extinguiſh, nor the waters quench its force; it reigns ſupreme in the heart, and diffuſes a gaiety over every path of life. By its influence labour is rendered eaſy, and duty becomes a delight.

In the *ſecond* place, The eaſe and pleaſure of the Chriſtian life will appear if we conſider the aſſiſtance we receive from above.

"Work out your ſalvation; for it is God that "worketh within you every good work and word." There are difficulties in the Chriſtian life: I have no intention to deceive you, my friends; you will often find it difficult to act the proper part; to maintain a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards man; to keep your paſſions within the bounds of reaſon; to ſubdue your irregular inclinations to the obedience of faith, and to hold faſt your integrity uncorrupted amid the temptations of the world. Theſe and many other difficulties will beſet you in running the Chriſtian race. But let me remind you, that one half of the pleaſures of human life ariſe from overcoming difficulties; and to overcome theſe difficulties which ſurround us, God beſtows the influences of his Holy Spirit. The Lord

is ever nigh to them who call upon him in the ſincerity of their heart. To thoſe who wait at the ſalutary ſtream, an angel deſcends to ſtir the waters. God never ſaid to the ſeed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. He never neglected the prayer that came from the heart. He never forſook the man that put his truſt in him.

If you were left to climb the arduous aſcent, by your own ſtrength alone, then the Chriſtian life would neither be eaſy nor pleaſant; then you might ſit down in deſpair of ever attaining the top. But whatever duties God calls you to, he gives you abilities to perform them. According as your days are, he hath promiſed that your ſtrength ſhall be. His grace is ſufficient for us; his ſtrength is made perfect in our weakneſs. No, my friends, God hath never withdrawn himſelf from the world. The Father of ſpirits is ever preſent with his rational offspring; he knows their frame, he helps their infirmities, aſſiſts their graces, ſtrengthens their powers, and makes perfect what concerns them. He aſſiſts the feeble, he revives the languiſhing, he ſupports the ſtrong. He aids the efforts of the captive, who endeavours to break looſe from the fetters that hold him; he favours the aſcent of the devout mind, that with the confidence of faith riſes to himſelf, and he forwards the pilgrim, journeying to his native country. The good huſbandman ſuperintends the vine which his own right hand planted. He waters his vineyard with dews from heaven, and breathes ethereal influence on thoſe trees of righteouſneſs that ſhall adorn the paradiſe of God.

Haſt thou not felt him, O Chriſtian! reſtraining

thy evil inclinations, ſuggeſting holy thoughts, kindling heavenly affections, and drawing thee to thy duty with a hand unſeen? Haſt thou not felt him as a Spirit within thy ſpirit, imparting ſecret ſtrength, animating thy frame as with new life, actuating thy faculties, purifying thy paſſions, begetting in thee an abhorrence of ſin and a love of righteouſneſs, and making all thy graces ſhine out with freſh beauty? How eaſy and delightful then will the Chriſtian life be, when you have divine aids to ſtrengthen, ſupport, and aſſiſt? It is God himſelf who is on your ſide, it is God himſelf who works with you; his wiſdom is your guide, his arm is your ſupport; his Spirit is your ſtrength; you loſe your own inſufficiency in the fulneſs of infinite perfection.

In the *third* place, It will appear, that the Chriſtian life is eaſy and pleaſant, if we conſider the encouragements the good man receives.

The good man waits not for all his happineſs till he come to heaven: he hath treaſures in hand, as well as poſſeſſions in hope: he hath a portion in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come. There is a ſenſe of moral good and evil implanted in the mind; a principle of conſcience which condemns us when we do ill, and applauds us when we do well. This principle is the chief foundation of our happineſs, and gives riſe to the greateſt pleaſures and the greateſt pains in human life. By means of this moral ſenſe, there is no peace to the wicked. Inward ſtruggles, ſtrong reluctance and averſion of mind, precede the commiſſion of ſin. Sin, when committed, is followed by guilty bluſhes, alarming fears, terrible reviews, ſtartling proſpects, and remorſe, with

all its hideous train. Againſt the ſinner, his own heart riſes up in judgment to condemn him; the terrors of the Lord ſet themſelves in array againſt him; a fire not blown conſumes him. "There is no peace "to the wicked." The foundations of peace are ſubverted in his mind; he is at enmity with himſelf; he is at enmity with his fellow-creatures; he is at enmity with God. It is *not ſo* with thoſe that take upon them the yoke of Chriſt. When pure religion forms the temper, and governs the life, all is peaceful and ſerene; the man is then in his proper element; the ſoul is in a ſtate of health and vigour; there is a beautiful correſpondence between the heart and the life; all is ſerene without, all is tranquil within. Delivered from the anxieties that perplex, and from the terrors that overwhelm the guilty man, the Chriſtian reſigns himſelf to peace and joy, conſcious that he poſſeſſes a temper of mind which is acceptable to God, and leads a life which is uſeful to men. In the heart of ſuch a man there is a bleſſed calmneſs and tranquillity, like that of the higheſt heavens.

But there is more than a calmneſs and tranquillity. The air may be calm and tranquil, when the day is dark; the ſea may be ſmooth, when there is miſt upon the waves; the ſky may be tranquil when it is overcaſt with clouds: but the pious and virtuous mind reſembles a ſky that is not only calm, but bright; reſembles a ſea that is not only ſmooth, but ſerene; reſembles an unclouded ſky, beautiful with the riſing ſun. There are joys in the Chriſtian life, unknown to tranſgreſſors: there is a ſpring ſhut up, and a fountain ſealed, that refreſhes the city of God; there

are ſecret conſolations reſerved for the juſt; there are ſilent pleaſures that flow into the pious mind; there is a ſtill ſmall voice that comes to the pure in heart, and bids them be of good cheer; there is an inward peace of God that paſſeth all underſtanding; there is a joy in the Holy Ghoſt, reſulting from the well-grounded hope of a happy immortality, that is unſpeakable and glorious.

When the heart is thus pure, it becomes the temple of the Deity; and, as a temple is conſecrated with the preſence of God, "If a man love me, and keep "my words, my Father will love him, and we will "come and make our abode with him." Who can deſcribe the joy of thoſe happy moments, when a preſent Deity is felt, when God manifeſts himſelf to his people, ſo as he does not to the world, when our fellowſhip is with the Father and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt? Then a foretaſte of immortality is given, the joys of the bleſſed are let down, and heaven deſcends to men.

In the *fourth* and laſt place, The eaſe and pleaſure of the Chriſtian life will appear, if we conſider the joyful proſpect that is ſet before us.

The Chriſtian has joys in this life; but he is not confined to theſe. His hopes do not terminate with life; they extend beyond the grave. Death puts a final period to the happineſs of the wicked man; but it is then that the happineſs of the righteous man begins. We are aſſured in Sacred Scripture, that there is a kingdom prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, when they ſhall enter into reſt from all their labours, and ſufferings, and ſorrows of this mortal life; when they ſhall enter into a

ſtate where no ignorance ſhall cloud the underſtanding, and no vice pervert the will; where nothing but love ſhall poſſeſs the ſoul, and nothing but gratitude employ the tongue; where they ſhall be admitted to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general aſſembly and church of the Firſt-born; where they ſhall ſee Jeſus at the right hand of the Father, and ſhall ſit down with him upon his throne; where they ſhall be admitted into the preſence of God, ſhall behold him face to face, and be changed into the ſame image, from glory to glory; that glory which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

To conclude, It may be obſerved, that it hath been the fate of Chriſtianity in all ages, to ſuffer more from its friends than from its enemies. Attacks from the enemies of our faith have generally proved ſubſervient to its propagation and ſucceſs; but the miſrepreſentations and injuries of its friends have often wounded it in a vital part. One of the greateſt of theſe miſrepreſentations, and one of the moſt flagrant injuries that ever was done to religion, was to repreſent it as a burdenſome ſervice; as a grievous and a galling yoke, to which no man would ſubmit, but from the terror of eternal puniſhment. What adds to the injury, this has ſometimes been done by perſons of real ſerioufneſs, who, unhappily poſſeſſed of a gloomy imagination, and who, probably, in ſome period of their days, having been guilty of crimes, have been ſo deeply affected with remorſe and contrition, that they have continued all their lifetime ſubject to bondage. But bleſſed be God, my friends, that ſuch unfavourable and forbidding

delineations of religion have no foundation in truth. In theſe volumes, Chriſtians are called upon to rejoice evermore. Religion promiſes happineſs to us in the life which now is, as well as in the life which is to come. The Wiſdom that is from above, is repreſented as having length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor. The prophets and apoſtles ranſack heaven and earth for images to expreſs the joys of the juſt. They bring together the moſt beautiful and moſt delightful objects in the whole compaſs of nature, and introduce the inanimate parts of the creation as joining in the happineſs of the good; the hills and the mountains breaking forth into ſinging, and all the trees of the wood ſhouting for joy. All concurs to prove the truth in the text, "My yoke is eaſy, and my bur-"den is light."

SERMON XXXII.

HEBREWS ii. 10.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, to make the Captain of their ſalvation perfect through ſufferings.

WHEN Chriſtianity was firſt publiſhed to the world, the earlieſt objection that was raiſed againſt it, aroſe from the low and ſuffering ſtate in which its Author appeared. It was a ſtumbling-block to the Jews, and ſeemed fooliſhneſs to the Greeks, that a prophet ſent from heaven to enlighten and reform the world, ſhould lead a life of indigence and obſcurity, and make his exit with ignominy and with pain.

If we conſider the character and prevailing opinions of the Jews and the Greeks at the time when our Saviour appeared, we ſhall ſee the reaſon of the unfavourable reception which they gave to his doctrines. The Jews had been the favourite people of God. By ſigns and miracles, and mighty works, he had delivered them from a ſtate of ſlavery in Egypt, had conducted them through the wilderneſs, and at laſt given them a ſettlement in the promiſed land. The arm of the Lord was made bare in their behalf, the ſea was divided to make way for them, and the waters ſtood as a wall on their right hand and on their left. During their wanderings through the

wilderneſs, a pillar of fire conducted them by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. Manna deſcended to them from heaven, and water ſprung from the flinty rock. Accuſtomed to theſe great and marvellous exertions of the Divine power, in the days of the Meſſiah they expected ſtill greater and more marvellous. If a God was to deſcend, they looked for him in the whirlwind, they looked for him in the thunder, they looked for him in the earthquake, and when the ſtill ſmall voice came, it was neither heard nor regarded. Beſides this, they had imbibed falſe notions concerning the Meſſiah, and the nature of his kingdom. They miſinterpreted the ancient oracles, which foretold his coming; they took the magnificent ſtyle of prophecy for literal deſcription, and, in place of a ſpiritual Saviour, expected a temporal prince. Accordingly, at the time when our Saviour appeared, the whole nation was intoxicated with the idea of a triumphant conqueror, who was to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to erect an univerſal monarchy on earth, and to make Zion the ſeat of empire, and capital of the world. To perſons under the influence of theſe prejudices, a ſuffering Meſſiah was a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence.

A different ſet of prejudices prevailed in Greece. The Greeks were an ingenious and an active people. Situated in a fortunate climate, and bleſſed with the higheſt degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the arts. Smitten with the love of wiſdom, they gave up their paternal eſtates to attend the ſchool of philoſophy. They journeyed from region to region, and traverſed the world, to bring home freſh acceſſions of knowl-

edge, and new improvements in the arts. Under theſe favourable circumſtances, Greece aroſe to fame, and beheld an age of glory, which is unrivalled in the records of hiſtory. The ideas of virtue and of merit amongſt any nation are founded upon the ſplendid examples with which their hiſtory abounds, and upon a perfection in thoſe arts which they cultivate, and in which they excel. The Greeks excelled in the arts to which the imagination gives birth, as well as in the ſciences, which reaſon brings to maturity, and their hiſtory abounded with the moſt ſplendid inſtances of public ſpirit, of heroic friendſhip, and of intrepid valour. Dazzled with the luſtre of theſe arts, and with the glory of theſe virtues, they fixed the ſtandard of excellence by them, and had no admiration to beſtow upon the humble Prophet of Nazareth, and the mortifying doctrines of the croſs. As they had been a ſtumbling-block to the Jews, to the Greeks they ſeemed fooliſhneſs.

It is then a ſubject worthy of our contemplation, to inquire into the reaſons that might move Almighty God, thus, in direct oppoſition to the prejudices and expectations of both Jews and Greeks, to appoint the Captain of our ſalvation to be made perfect by a ſtate of ſufferings. It is hence propoſed to ſhow the expediency and propriety of appointing ſuch a Captain of our ſalvation. This will appear, from conſidering our bleſſed Saviour in theſe four capital views of his character: as the founder of a new religion, as a pattern of all perfection, as a prieſt who was to make atonement, and a king who was to be crowned with glory.

In the *firſt* place, If we conſider our Saviour as

the author of a new religion, his appearance in a ſuffering ſtate frees his religion from an objection which applies with full force to every other religion in the world.

Amongſt all the nations whoſe hiſtory we have recorded, the laws gave birth to the religion. The public faith was modelled by the ſovereign authority, and eſtabliſhed by the ſovereign power. The prince was alſo the prophet. The religion which he eſtabliſhed, was ſuch as ſuited the genius of the people, the nature of the climate, or the views of the ſovereign; and, in ſhort, was nothing more than a mere engine of civil government. When we take a view of Chriſtianity, a different ſcene preſents itſelf. Here we ſee a religion publiſhed by a perſon, obſcure and unknown, amongſt a nation hated and deſpiſed to a proverb, one day to become the religion of the world, and to be propagated by the efforts of a few illiterate fiſhermen, who had to combat againſt the prejudices of the Jews, the ſuperſtition of the Gentiles, the wiſdom of the philoſophers, the power of armies and of kings, the ancient ſyſtems of religion eſtabliſhed over the whole world, and the combined wit and genius and malice of all mankind.

Had our Saviour appeared in the pomp of a temporal prince, as the Jews expected him; had he appeared in the character of a great philoſopher, as the Greeks would have wiſhed him, often had we heard of his power and of his policy, and been told, that our religion was more nearly allied to this world than to the other. But when we hear the Author of our faith declaring from the beginning, that he muſt ſuffer many things in his life, and be put to an igno-

minious and tormenting death; when we hear him forewarning his diſciples, that they were to meet with the ſame fate, theſe ſuſpicions muſt for ever vaniſh from our mind. Thus our religion ſtands clear of an objection, from which nothing, perhaps, could have purged it, but the blood of its divine Author.

In the *ſecond* place, If we conſider our Saviour as a pattern of virtue and all perfection, the expediency of his appearing in a ſuffering ſtate will further be evident.

One great end of our Saviour's coming into the world was to ſet us an example, that we might follow his ſteps. But, unleſs his life had been diverſified with ſufferings, the utility of his example had been in a great meaſure defeated. What we generally call a perfect character, is a cold inſipid object, that does not intereſt mankind. Were it poſſible for nature to realize the man of virtue, as drawn by thoſe who miſrepreſent the Stoic philoſophy; a man without the feelings of nature, and the weakneſſes of humanity, proof againſt the influence of paſſion, and the attacks of pain; we would turn aſide from ſuch a caricatura of humanity, and exclude the faultleſs monſter from the number of our ſpecies. No example can make any impreſſion upon the minds of men, but the example of men of like paſſions with themſelves. Let us ſuppoſe, that the life of an angel were exhibited to the world, it might afford a pleaſant ſubject of contemplation. But the queſtion would naturally ariſe, What is this to me? This does not belong to my nature; I diſcover here no traces of my own character, no features of humanity. On the other

hand, to ſet up an imperfect example for our imitation, would be attended with ſtill worſe conſequences. We know, from the inſtances of the ſaints recorded in Scripture, how apt men are to quote their imperfections as an excuſe for themſelves, and by copying after theſe, come ſhort of that perfection to which they might have arrived.

Both theſe defects are remedied in the example of Jeſus of Nazareth. His example is perfect, and, at the ſame time, has all that effect upon us which the example of one of our brethren would have had. When we behold the man Chriſt Jeſus involved in diſtreſſes ſimilar to our own, clothed with all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and groaning like ourſelves under the ſinleſs miſeries of life, we are touched with the feeling of his infirmities and his pains; our paſſions take part with the illuſtrious ſufferer, and we behold him in ſome meaſure brought down to our own level. It is from theſe ſhades that this picture derives its beauty, derives its effect upon the world, and that, notwithſtanding the glory that ſurrounds it, we recogniſe our own image, we trace the features and the lineaments of humanity, and by theſe, are drawn to copy after ſuch an illuſtrious pattern of excellence and perfection.

The ſuffering ſtate in which our Lord appeared, not only conduced to the efficacy of his example, but alſo to its more extenſive utility, by preſenting an ample theatre for the ſublimeſt virtues to appear. It is obſerved by an hiſtorian, in relating the life of Cyrus the Great, that there was one circumſtance wanting to the glory of that illuſtrious prince; and that was, the having his virtue tried by ſome ſudden re-

verſe of fortune, and ſtruggling for a time under ſome grievous calamity. The obſervation is juſt. Men are made for ſuffering as well as for action. Many faculties of our frame; the moſt reſpectable attributes of the mind, as well as the moſt amiable qualities of the heart; carry a manifeſt reference to a ſtate of adverſity, to the dangers which we are deſtined to combat, and the diſtreſſes we are appointed to bear. Had the Greeks conſulted their own writers, they would have given them proper information on this head. To approve a man thoroughly virtuous, ſaid one of their ſages, he muſt be tortured, he muſt be bound, he muſt be ſcourged, and having ſuffered all evils, muſt be empaled or crucified.

Who are the perſonages in hiſtory that we admire the moſt? Thoſe who have ſuffered ſome ſignal diſtreſs, and from a hoſt of evils have come forth conquerors. If we look into civil hiſtory, need I call up to your remembrance the patriots of Greece, the heroes of Rome; the wiſe, the great, and the good of every age, who grew illuſtrious as they grew diſtreſſed, and in the darkeſt hour of adverſity ſhone out with unwonted and meridian ſplendour. If we look into ſacred hiſtory, we ſhall find that the good and holy men, who are there pointed out as patterns to the world, like the Captain of their ſalvation, were made perfect through ſuffering. The moſt illuſtrious names that are recorded in the book of life, the patriarchs of the ancient world, the prophets of the Jewiſh ſtate, the martyrs of the Chriſtian church are witneſſes on record of this important truth, that the moſt honorable laurels are gathered in the vale of tears, and that the crown of glory ſits brighteſt on

the brows of thoſe who have gained it with their blood. Jeſus of Nazareth, too, was appointed to learn obedience by the things that he ſuffered. All the virtues of adverſity ſhone forth in his life. The patience that acquieſces with cheerfulneſs, in all the appointments of Providence, the magnanimity which triumphs over an enemy by forgiveneſs, the charity which prays for its perſecutors, are ſtriking and conſpicuous parts of his character. But we injure his merit as a ſufferer, if we conſider it only as breaking out in ſingle and occaſional acts of virtue. His ſufferings themſelves, his condeſcending to become a victim for the ſins of men, and to die for the happineſs of the world, is an infinite exertion of benevolence that admits of no compariſon, that is tranſcendent and meritorious. The conſideration of this, more than the circumſtances of his departure, more than the rocks which were rent, than the ſun which was darkened, than the dead which aroſe, had we been preſent at the ſcene, ſhould have made us cry out with the centurion, "Surely this man was the "Son of God."

In the *third* place, If we conſider our Saviour as a prieſt, who was to make an atonement for the ſins of men, the expediency of his making this atonement by ſufferings and death, will be manifeſt. It is one of the doctrines revealed in the New Teſtament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As therefore he was our immediate Creator, and as his deſign in our creation was defeated by ſin, there was an evident propriety that he himſelf ſhould interpoſe in our behalf, and retrieve the affairs of a world, which he had created with his own hands. But it

is evident, at firſt ſight, that redemption is a greater work than creation; that it requires a more powerful exertion to recover a world lying in wickedneſs, to happineſs and virtue, than to create it at firſt in a ſtate of innocence. In the work of redemption, therefore, it was expedient, that there ſhould be a brighter diſplay of the divine perfections, and a greater exertion of benevolence than was exhibited in the work of creation. Now, if God, without a ſatisfaction by ſufferings, and by a mere act of indemnity, had blotted out the ſins of the world, ſuch a diſplay of the divine attributes would not have been given. But by the Son of God's appearing in our nature, and ſuffering the puniſhment which was due to our ſins, a ſcene is preſented, on which the angels deſire to look. This, in the language of Scripture, was the glory that excelleth; here the Almighty made bare his holy arm, and gave teſtimony to the nations what was in the power of a God to effectuate. Hereby all the perfections of the divine nature were glorified. That immaculate purity, which cannot look upon ſin, and that aſtoniſhing love which could not behold the ruin of the ſinner, were awfully diſplayed. The majeſty of the divine government was ſuſtained, and the rigour of the law was fulfilled, juſtice was ſatisfied, mercy without reſtraint, and without meaſure, flowed upon the children of men. In ſhort, more glory redounded to God, and greater benevolence was made manifeſt to men, than when the morning ſtars ſung together at the birth of nature, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy.

In the *laſt* place, If we conſider our Saviour in that ſtate of glory to which he is now aſcended, the pro-

priety of his being made perfect by ſufferings will more fully appear. Becauſe he humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, therefore hath God highly exalted him, hath given him a name above every name, and committed to him all power in heaven and in earth. By the appointment of Providence, ſuffering hath ever been the path to honor. Ought not Chriſt, therefore, alſo to have ſuffered, and to enter into his glory? As, upon earth, he ſubmitted to the loweſt degree of abaſement, and appeared in the form of a ſervant, he is now in heaven exalted to the higheſt pinnacle of honor, and appears in the form of God. As, in his ſtate of humiliation, he was poor, and had not where to lay his head, he is now the Lord of nature, and inherits the treaſures of heaven and of earth. Inſtead of the mock title of King of the Jews, which they wrote upon his croſs, he is now in very deed the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Inſtead of the crown of thorns, which pierced and wounded his bleſſed head, he is now for ever encircled with a crown of glory.

What dignity does it reflect upon all our race, that one who wears our likeneſs, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, now ſits upon the throne of Nature, now holds in his hand the ſceptre of Providence, and exerciſes uncontrolled dominion over the viſible and inviſible worlds! What abundant conſolation will it adminiſter to Chriſtians in all their afflictions, what openings of joy will it let down into the vale of tears, when we recollect that the Governor of the world is a God who partakes of our own nature, who, in the days of his humanity, had a fellow-feeling of all our

wants; who, like ourſelves, was a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief; who, by conſequence, will be more apt to ſympathize with his fellow-ſufferers, and to ſend relief to thoſe ſorrows of which he himſelf bore a part!

SERMON XXXIII.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

"MY ways are not as your ways, and "my thoughts are not as your thoughts," ſaid the Lord to the Old Teſtament church. And never, ſurely, did the Eternal Wiſdom ſo diſappoint the expectations and blaſt the hopes of men, as by the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Had men been conſulted concerning the ſtate in which it was moſt proper for the Meſſiah to appear, they would have introduced him into the world with all the circumſtances of external pomp and ſplendour; they would have put into his hand the ſceptre of dominion over the nations, and ſubjected to his kingdom all the people of the earth, from the riſing to the ſetting of the ſun. A Meſſiah, whoſe glory ſhould not ſtrike the ſenſes, whoſe kingdom was not to be of this world, who was to be made perfect through ſufferings, who was to triumph by humiliation, who was to become victorious by a ſhameful death, and in whoſe humiliation, and ſufferings, and croſs, the world was to glory; that was an idea which never preſented itſelf to their minds, and which, if it had preſented itſelf, would have been immediately rejected, as having no form nor comelineſs, for which it could have been deſired:

yet, ſuch was the method contrived by Infinite Wiſdom to accompliſh the redemption of the world. One great end of all the divine diſpenſations, has been to humble and confound the *pride* of man. It was pride that at firſt introduced moral evil into the world. It was pride that tempted the angels to rebel againſt their Maker, that brought them down from the manſions of light, to the abodes of darkneſs and deſpair. It was pride that tempted our firſt parents to diſobey the divine commandment. The language of their apoſtaſy was, "I will aſcend into "the heavens, I will riſe above the height of the "clouds, I will exalt my throne above the ſtars of "God, I will be like the Moſt High." Pride, although not made for man in his beſt eſtate, hath not forſaken him in his worſt. Even the fall did not efface the ſtrong impreſſion from his mind. As if he had continued the ſame noble being he came from the hands of his Creator; as if he had been ſtill the happy lord of the inferior world, he retained the conſciouſneſs of his original excellence, when that excellence was no more; he ſurrendered himſelf to deluſions which flattered his vain mind; he tried new paths to elevation and worldly greatneſs; he even appropriated to himſelf the attributes of the divinity, and, poſſeſſed with the madneſs of ambition, arrogated to himſelf thoſe honors which are due to God only. Hence the world deified mortal men, worſhipped as its creators thoſe to whom it had lately given birth, and adored as immortal and divine the human creatures whoſe death it had beheld.

As man fell by pride, it was the appointment of Heaven that he ſhould riſe by humility. This doc-

trine was early delivered to the world. God teſtified by his prophets, that he knew the proud afar off; that the proud in heart was an abomination to him, but that he would hear the cry of the humble; that though he dwelt in the high and holy place, he would dwell alſo with that man who was of a humble and contrite ſpirit. But more than inſtructions were requiſite to reform the ſentiments, and change the ſpirit, of a world which had been ſo much intoxicated with dreams of earthly greatneſs, and ſo long enchanted with ſpectacles of human glory. Accordingly it pleaſed God, in the fulneſs of time, to ſend forth his own Son into the world, in faſhion as a man, in the form of a ſervant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs, and hath appointed all Chriſtians to glory in his croſs, nay, to glory in nothing elſe. "God forbid that I ſhould "glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

Theſe words might give occaſion to many uſeful diſcourſes. All that I intend at preſent is, to ſhow you by what means we are to glory in the croſs of Chriſt.

In the *firſt* place, then, We are to glory in the croſs of Chriſt, by frequently meditating upon the circumſtances of his death and paſſion.

The human actions and events in which we glory, become often the objects of contemplation; they preſent themſelves ſpontaneouſly to the mind, and become the favourite ideas of the ſoul. We turn them on all ſides, we view them in every light, we delight in them, we dwell upon them, we make them our meditation day and night. Surely, then, it becomes us to revolve often in our mind this great myſtery of

godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh, and dying on a croſs for the ſalvation of the world. The angels in heaven, as we are told in Scripture, deſired with earneſt eyes to look into the ſufferings of Jeſus; much more ſhould we make the ſufferings of Jeſus the object of our meditation, for he took not on him the nature of angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham.

Call up to thy mind, then, O Chriſtian! the doleful circumſtances of thy Saviour's paſſion, the ſad variety of ſorrows which he ſuffered, the torment of body and agony of mind which he underwent, the cruel, the ignominious, and accurſed death which he endured. Make theſe things preſent to thy mind, till the blended emotions of contrition and ſorrow, of awe and wonder, of joy and pleaſure, of gratitude and love, take poſſeſſion of thy heart. "Can you not "watch with me one hour?" ſaid our Lord to his diſciples, when he entered into his agony. "Can "you not watch with me one hour?" ſaith our Lord to his diſciples in every age, when they are about to renew the memorials of his death and paſſion. Agreeably to his dying charge, accompany thy Redeemer, O Chriſtian! in the laſt ſcene of his ſufferings. Look to him with ſuch a lively ſenſe and feeling of his ſorrows, till, like Paul, thou art crucified with Chriſt. While all nature is thrown into diſorder, while the rocks are rent, and the dead ariſe, wilt thou continue unmoved? Wilt thou continue harder than the rocks, and more inſenſible than the aſhes of the dead? No; while thou thus muſeſt, holy affections will be kindled, and the heavenly fire will burn; from the altar which was erected on the hill of Calvary, a living ember will touch thy lips, and purify thy heart.

In the *ſecond* place, We are to glory in the croſs of Chriſt, by giving his death that rank in our eſtimation, and that place in our affections, which its importance requires.

When we glory in any thing to an extraordinary degree, we prefer it to all others, we give it the chief place in our heart, and reſt our happineſs in a great meaſure upon it. And thus it becomes us to glory in the croſs of Chriſt; thus it becomes us to prefer it to all things, to give it the higheſt place in our heart, and to reſt our eternal happineſs on it alone. The manifeſtation of the Son of God is, in all regards, the moſt wonderful of the divine works, and to us in particular is the moſt important event that diſtinguiſhes the annals of time. His death upon the croſs was the moſt ſplendid part of his mediatorial office; the moſt illuſtrious inſtance of his love to men, and the moſt meritorious act of his obedience to God. By his death, the wrath of God was averted from the world, and the atonement requiſite for the ſins of men was made. By his death the glories of the Godhead ſhone out with new luſtre, the majeſty of the moral law was not only ſuſtained, but rendered illuſtrious, and a dignity was reflected on virtue which it had never known before. To his death we are indebted for the pardon of our ſins, for adoption into the family of Heaven, and for our hopes of a happy immortality in the future world. His death upon the croſs quenched the fire of hell, and ſet open the gate of heaven for a repenting world to enter in.

In the croſs of Chriſt, therefore, we do not glory aright, if we admire only the circle of virtue which ſhone out in his ſuffering ſtate; if we admire only

the patience with which he ſubmitted to all the appointments of Providence, the fortitude with which he encountered all the dangers of life, the magnanimity which induced him to forgive his enemies, the charity which prompted him to pray for thoſe who had bound him to the accurſed tree, and that noble principle of love to mankind, the ſpring of all his undertakings as our Redeemer. This merit we muſt do more than admire; upon it we muſt reſt as the ground of our acceptance with God, and the foundation of our title to eternal life. The bleſſed above aſcribe their ſalvation not to their own righteouſneſs, but to the merits of their Redeemer; "Unto him "that loved us," is the ſtrain of their ſong, "Unto "him that loved us unto the death, and waſhed us "from our ſins in his own blood, be praiſe and hon-"or and bleſſing." "Theſe are they," ſaid the angel to the Apoſtle John, "who have come out "of great tribulation; they have waſhed their robes, "and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, "therefore are they before the throne."

Our virtues are inſufficient to procure our acceptance with God, or merit a title to happineſs in the life to come. Even man, in his ſtate of innocence, could not pretend to have merit with his Creator. By the law of his nature he was bound to render obedience to that God from whom he received his being, and to whom he owed his preſervation. The moral law was the law of his being. When he had done his beſt, he did no more than was his duty. If man, then, in a ſtate of innocence, could not claim the crown of heavenly glory, as the reward of perſonal merit, ſhall man in a ſtate of guilt pretend to have

merit with a holy God, with whom evil cannot dwell, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Suppoſing the day of judgment arrived, where is the man that durſt face the tribunal of the Almighty, and demand one of the thrones of heaven upon the footing of perſonal righteouſneſs? The moſt arrogant preſumption durſt not aſpire ſo high. But, bleſſed be God, that though we are unworthy, yet worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive bleſſing, and honor, and praiſe, becauſe he hath redeemed us by his blood, and hath given us a right to ſit down with him upon his throne. To fallen man the croſs is the tree of life; there grow the fruits which are for the healing of the nations; fruits, which if we take and eat, we ſhall live for ever.

In the *third* place, We are to glory in the croſs of Chriſt, by commemorating his death in the holy ſacrament.

Thoſe events in which a nation glories the moſt, thoſe events which reſtored or ſecured to them their liberties, from which they begin an æra of happy time, are commemorated with a laudable ſpirit of joy. A day is ſet apart, that the memory of ſuch glorious deeds may be tranſmitted down to poſterity, and that the names of thoſe who diſtinguiſhed themſelves on the occaſion, as patriots or as heroes, may receive a juſt tribute of praiſe from all ſucceeding times. Agreeably to this, the Chriſtian church hath in all ages ſet apart certain times to keep in remembrance this moſt important event, the death and paſſion of our Redeemer. It was the commandment of our Lord himſelf; it was his commandment, given in that night in which he was betray-

ed; it was his laſt commandment to his diſciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." And ſurely the diſciple who loves his Lord, will be cautious how he diſregards his dying charge. There are, indeed, perſons in the world, who bear the Chriſtian name, and who, notwithſtanding, never join in this ſolemn ordinance. Although they were baptiſed into the faith of Jeſus, and have never publicly renounced Chriſtianity, yet, inſtead of glorying in the croſs, they ſeem to be aſhamed of it, and teſtify plainly to the world, that they pay no regard to the dying charge of their Lord, and that they would bluſh to be ſeen at a communion-table. How ſuch perſons can reconcile their conduct to any ſenſe of duty, to any idea of Chriſtianity, is beyond my capacity to diſcover. Sure I am, if they have any conſcience, if they have any reflection, if they have any feeling at all, it will interrupt their peace of mind in life, it will ſhut up the chief avenues to comfort in their laſt moments, and prevent that tranquillity and fulneſs of joy which is then the portion of the Chriſtian, to think that they have lived in the wilful neglect and contempt of an expreſs injunction of their Lord, and may have, in ſome degree, incurred the guilt of thoſe whom the apoſtle declares to have trodden under foot the Son of God, and to have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they might have been ſanctified, an unholy thing.

You ſay you are unfit to approach the table of the Lord. Let me aſk you, Are you fit to *die?* Do you think it more ſolemn, more awful, to witneſs a good confeſſion at theſe tables, than to appear before the judgment-ſeat of God? Do you think, that they

ought to be received to the ſociety of the bleſſed above, who never joined themſelves to the communion of the ſaints below? Do you think that Jeſus will admit thoſe to ſit down with him on his throne in heaven, who were aſhamed to ſit down with him at his table on earth? What is, then, I beſeech you, in the holy ſacrament, to baniſh any decent and good man from theſe tables? We ſit down at the table of the Lord, to give thanks unto God for his ineſtimable love in the redemption of the world; to expreſs our regard and gratitude to our Redeemer, who loved us unto the death; to unite ourſelves to all the faithful and the good, as being members of the ſame body, and to bind ourſelves by ſolemn vows to the practice of whatever is amiable and excellent and praiſe-worthy. And if there be any man ſo void of gratitude and love to God his Creator, and to Jeſus Chriſt his Redeemer, as to be averſe to acknowledge the favours he has received; if there be any man ſo dead to the feelings of the heart, to benevolence and love, as to have no bowels of love for his brethren of mankind; if there be any man ſo loſt to the ſenſe of virtue, and to the beauty of holineſs, as to ſee no charms, to feel no attractions, in thoſe things which are lovely, and pure, and honeſt, and of good report; then, indeed, he is unfit to ſit down at the table of the Lord, he has neither portion nor lot in this matter; he is alſo unfit to join with Chriſtians in any religious duty; nay, he is unfit to perform a decent part as a member of civil ſociety.

I addreſs theſe things to thoſe who abſent themſelves from this ordinance, from a wilful diſregard. To thoſe who are reſtrained by their unhappy fears

and ſcruples, I ſpeak in a different language, and ſuch perſons I can aſſure, that they who, after ſerious, and diligent, and mature preparation, ſtill think themſelves unworthy, are not the leaſt acceptable gueſts at the table of the Lord. Do you feel a grateful ſenſe of the love of Jeſus to mankind, particularly that amazing act of his love, in giving his life as a ranſom for the world? Have you ſuch a value for the covenant eſtabliſhed by your Saviour's blood, that you are reſolved to accept of it with gratitude, and adhere to it with all your ſoul? Have you ſuch a regard to holineſs and univerſal goodneſs, that you determine to lead decent, and pious, and exemplary lives? If you have theſe, come to expreſs that gratitude, to accept that covenant, and to ſeal thoſe vows at the foot of the croſs. Jeſus breaks not the bruiſed reed, nor quenches the ſmoking flax. The humility of the heart will not baniſh the Eternal Spirit from taking up his reſidence with you.

In the *fourth* and *laſt* place, We are to glory in the croſs of Chriſt, by living to thoſe purpoſes and for thoſe ends for which Jeſus died.

We glory in the Reformation from Popery, when we maintain and defend that pure religion which was then eſtabliſhed. We glory in the Revolution, when we ſupport the rights and maintain the liberties which were ſecured to us at that memorable period: and, in like manner, we glory in the croſs of Chriſt, when we fulfil the intention, and anſwer the purpoſe for which Jeſus died. Jeſus died, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In this view, Chriſtians, your whole life is glorying in the croſs of

Chriſt. When you ſuppreſs the motions of irregular deſire, when you conquer the exceſs of paſſion, and ſubdue the vices which war againſt the ſoul, you are glorying in the croſs of Chriſt; for he, upon the croſs, crucified theſe your enemies, and died that you might be delivered out of their hands. When you check in yourſelves the ſpirit of animoſity, when your heart relents towards him againſt whom your wrath was kindled, when you forego reſentment, forgive an injury, and hold out the ready hand of reconciliation to your offending brother, you are glorying in the croſs of Chriſt; for he, upon the croſs, diſplayed a moſt amazing inſtance of forgiveneſs, in praying for thoſe who brought him to that accurſed death. When your heart expands with benevolence to mankind; when you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and reſcue the oppreſſed; when you feel the diſtreſſes of your unhappy brethren and relieve them, or give a tear to the diſtreſſes you cannot relieve, you are glorying in the croſs of Chriſt; for he, upon the croſs, exhibited a moſt illuſtrious inſtance of benevolence, in giving his life for the happineſs of the world. When you yield to the ſweet impulſe of natural affection, when you indulge the tender ſenſibilities of the heart, when you cultivate the ſpirit of a generous friendſhip, and join in the endearing offices of ſocial life, you are glorying in the croſs of Chriſt; for he, upon the croſs, gave us a moſt amiable diſplay of theſe virtues. One of his laſt acts on earth was an act of natural affection and friendſhip; from the croſs he recommended his mother to the care of the friend whom he loved.

In ſhort, whenever you make advances in the di-

vine life, and add to your faith virtue, and to virtue, patience, and temperance, and brotherly kindneſs, and charity; whenever you do a good deed, whenever you think a good thought, you are glorying in the croſs of Chriſt; for he, upon the croſs, perfected this character, and finiſhed the pattern of univerſal goodneſs for the world to ſtudy, to imitate, and to admire.

SERMON XXXIV.

JOHN xix. 30.

——*It is finiſhed.*——

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

THESE are the laſt words of Jeſus. The words which he uttered when his hour was come; when in the preſence of a great aſſembly, he breathed out his ſoul in agony upon the croſs. It was ordered by the providence of God, that as Jeſus by his death was the Saviour of the world, he ſhould die publicly, when all Iſrael from Dan to Beerſheba were aſſembled at Jeruſalem.

There is ſomething grand and awful in aſſembled multitudes of men, eſpecially when convened on any great occaſion, ſuch as to paſs ſentence of life and death. In that ſilence of the mind, that awful pauſe of thought, the human genius is agitated ſtrongly; it labours in expectation, and fills up the dreadful interval with emotions of terror and aſtoniſhment. When, therefore, at this period, all Judea was preſent to celebrate the paſchal ſolemnity; when the great council of the nation, the chief prieſts, the ſcribes and the elders, convened in Sanhedrim, added dignity to the multitude; when Pilate the Governor of Judea, and Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee, with their attending armies, diſplayed the grandeur of the Roman empire, and ſuſtained the majeſty of the maſters of the world; when all theſe were aſ-

ſembled at the time of the death and crucifixion of a Prophet of the Lord, How great would be the agitations of the multitude! What aſtoniſhing ideas would ſtrike the mind, when they heard the expiring Prophet cry out, "It is finiſhed!" When in a moment they ſaw that the face of nature was changed; when they felt the earthquake which ſhook the nations; when they were ſtruck with the darkneſs which veiled the ſun; when they were ſurrounded with the inhabitants of the eternal world who aroſe from their graves, would not they then think, indeed, that all was finiſhed, that the laſt hour of nature was come, and that the world was departing with its Creator?

Never from the time that the idea of creation roſe in the Divine Mind, did an hour revolve that laboured with ſuch vaſt events. To this great point of view, as to the deciding hour in the annals of time, as to the criſis of the moral world, all the preceding ages looked forward, and all ſucceeding ages looked back. The grand queſtion was now deciding, Whether happineſs or miſery ſhould finally triumph in the univerſe of God? From this event the powers of hell dated the riſe or fall of their dominion. The fate of the creation was now weighing in the ſcales. All eternity reſted upon this hour.

Whilſt we are now aſſembled to commemorate theſe great events, and to renew the memorials of thy death and paſſion, be preſent with us moſt bleſſed Jeſus! May we behold thy face, not as it was then covered with anguiſh and tears, but ſmiling upon us with heavenly complacence! Fill our hearts with love to thee, and lead us joyfully up into thine holy altar!

"It is finiſhed," ſaid our Lord when he expired upon the croſs. What was then finiſhed? The following events. God had early manifeſted to the fathers his purpoſe of grace to redeem the world. He choſe a peculiar people from whom the Redeemer was to deſcend, and appointed a diſpenſation of religion to prepare the world for his appearance. By the death of Jeſus, this ancient diſpenſation was finiſhed.

Jeſus Chriſt, foretold by all the prophets, had now appeared unto Iſrael. As the Prophet of the world, he publiſhed a new religion which he adorned by his life, which he confirmed by his miracles, and which he had now ſealed with his blood. By the death on the croſs, his miſſion to the Jews, as the Author of a new religion, was finiſhed.

From the beginning of the world, God had appointed ſacrifices to make atonement for ſin. Theſe could not by any virtue of their own propitiate the Deity, or purify the ſoul from pollution. A more perfect ſacrifice, therefore, was neceſſary in order to atone the divine wrath. By the death of Jeſus, this atonement was finiſhed. Jeſus Chriſt, thus conſtituted the Prophet of the world, and the Prieſt who was to make atonement for the ſins of men, was to be made perfect through ſuffering. By the appointment of Providence, he was to ſuffer before he entered into his glory. By his death on the croſs, theſe ſufferings were finiſhed.

That is; the Old Teſtament diſpenſation was finiſhed, the miſſion of Chriſt to Iſrael, as the Author of a new religion, was finiſhed, the atonement requiſite for the ſins of the world was finiſhed, and the ſufferings of the Meſſiah were finiſhed.

In the *firſt* place, then, The ancient diſpenſation which had been erected, and the plan of Providence which had been carrying on to introduce the time of the Meſſiah, were now finiſhed.

When our firſt parents had broken the covenant of innocence, had forfeited their title to immortality, and expoſed themſelves to the ſanction of the violated law, the Judge deſcended to pronounce their ſentence. But along with the terrors of the Judge, he mingled alſo the grace of the Saviour; and when he pronounced their doom, he comforted them with the hopes of mercy. He diſcovered to them his benevolent deſign of redeeming the world by a mediator who was to interpoſe in their behalf, and gave them the gracious promiſe, that the ſeed of the woman ſhould bruiſe the head of the ſerpent. Thus, no ſooner had man fallen, than the Redeemer was promiſed who was to repair the ruins of his fall. In the following ages, the providence of God ſeems to have been entirely occupied in preparing the world for this great event. If he manifeſts himſelf to the patriarchs, it is to ſhow them the day of the Meſſiah afar off; if he inſpires the prophets, it is to foretel his appearance; if he chooſes a peculiar people, it is to render them the depoſitaries of the promiſes concerning his coming; if he appoints ſacrifices, ceremonies, and religious rites, it is to trace beforehand the hiſtory of the Meſſiah. Do you read of the blood of the paſchal lamb, which being ſprinkled on the doors of the Iſraelites, ſecured them from the deſtroying angel? It was a figure of Jeſus Chriſt, the Lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world, who, as our paſſover, was ſacrificed to deliv-

er us from eternal death. Do you read of a rock, which being ſmitten, furniſhed waters to a great people? That rock, ſays Paul, was a figure of Chriſt, from whom proceed fountains of living water ſpringing up into everlaſting life. Do you read of a brazen ſerpent lifted up in the wilderneſs which cured the Iſraelites? It was a type of the Son of man who was lifted up on the croſs for the ſalvation of the world. In ſhort, the whole legal economy, the whole ſyſtem of Levitical worſhip was intended to prefigure, and to introduce a better diſpenſation.

The plan of Providence which had been carrying on to prepare the world for this great event, was not confined to the Jewiſh nation; it extended over the whole earth. This was the great end of all the deſigns of the Deity, and furniſhes the key to all the divine diſpenſations. "If empires roſe or fell; if "war divided, or peace united the nations; if learning civilized their manners, or philoſophy enlarged "their views, all was, by the ſecret decree of heaven, "made to ripen the world for that *fulneſs of time* "when Chriſt was to publiſh the whole counſel of "God." What a magnificent conception, my friends, does it give us of the divine government, when we behold the princes, the kings, and the maſters of the world, entering one after another upon the ſtage of time, to prepare the way of the King of kings!

If, in the Gentile world, a plan was carrying on to prepare the nations for the coming of the Meſſiah, among the choſen people a diſpenſation was erected to typify and prefigure the great events of his life. The economy which was eſtabliſhed, the ſacrifices

which were appointed, the ceremonies in their church, and the events in their hiſtory, all concurred to this great end. Do you read of a continual burnt-offering? It was a type of him who through the eternal Spirit offered up himſelf a ſacrifice without ſpot unto God. Do you read of the paſchal lamb? It was a type of that Lamb which was ſlain from the foundation of the world. The law only paved the way to the goſpel. Moſes and the prophets were but the harbingers of the Meſſiah. This ancient diſpenſation was now come to a cloſe: and when our Saviour on the croſs cried out, *It is finiſhed*, "the law ceaſ-"ed, the goſpel commenced."

In the *ſecond* place, The miſſion of Chriſt to Iſrael as the author of a new religion was finiſhed.

God had never left the nations without a witneſs of himſelf. In the early ages of the world he ſent forth his light and his truth. He manifeſted himſelf to the fathers, and taught them the knowledge of the true religion. From time to time righteous men were raiſed up, and a ſucceſſion of prophets and of martyrs was carried on, whoſe lives and doctrines diſtinguiſh and adorn the ſeveral ages of the world. One nation was choſen above the reſt, to whom the living oracles were committed. The particular revelations which had been delivered in the patriarchal ages, the various rays from the Father of lights which had been ſcattered over the earth, were here collected, and ſhone out with new ſplendour. Nevertheleſs, though God was the Author of this diſpenſation, though he himſelf was the King of Jeſhurun, and a Lawgiver to Iſrael, the economy which he eſtabliſhed among his own people, was not intend-

ed to be immutable, or make the comers thereunto perfect. It is one of the great laws by which this world is governed, that no perfection of any kind is attained of a ſudden. There is a riſe and a progreſs in the works of nature. This holds in all the productions of the natural, and in all the improvements of the moral world. This alſo ſeems to have regulated the divine conduct with reſpect to the diſpenſations of grace.

"The light of religion was not poured upon the "world all at once, and with its full ſplendour; the "obſcurity of the dawn went before the brightneſs "of the noon-day. The will of God was at firſt "made known by revelations, uſeful indeed, but "dark and myſterious. To theſe ſucceeded others "more clear and perfect. In proportion as the ſit-"uation of the world rendered it neceſſary, the Al-"mighty was pleaſed further to open and unfold "his gracious ſcheme." The light increaſed as it ſhone. Star after ſtar aroſe to enlighten and bleſs the earth, till the day-ſpring from on high appeared. As in the early period of our days the inſtructions which we receive look forward to manhood, and the various ſteps we take conduct us to future life; ſo in this infancy of the church, a diſpenſation took place which was only intended to introduce a better. Every thing in the Jewiſh diſpenſation teſtified that it was not intended to laſt for ever. The preſence of God circumſcribed to one nation, the place of acceptable worſhip confined to Jeruſalem, the numerous rites and burdenſome ceremonies of the Moſaic law, the typical and ſhadowy nature of the whole diſpenſation, ſhowed that it was nothing more than

a temporary inſtitution, appointed to introduce a more perfect worſhip, and to prepare the world for a new diſpenſation, which was to comprehend every nation of the earth, and to extend through all the ages of the world.

Accordingly Moſes, the Jewiſh legiſlator, after he had eſtabliſhed their government and formed their laws, tells them that another prophet ſhould ariſe among them, and deliver a new revelation: "Thus "ſaith the Lord, I will raiſe up a prophet to you "from among your brethren; I will put my words "in his mouth; him ſhall ye hear in all things." Accordingly, the Old Teſtament church never reſted upon any revelation which was made to them, but always looked forward to the promiſed æra when the great Prophet ſhould ariſe, who was to fill Zion with judgment and righteouſneſs.

As the Old Teſtament economy, in its beſt eſtate, was but a temporary inſtitution, in the progreſs of time it was greatly corrupted. After the return from the Babyloniſh captivity, there was a ſtrange degeneracy among the people of God. The ſpirit of prophecy ceaſed, and the intercourſe between heaven and earth was ſhut up. The Jews had been at all times remarkably prone to ſuperſtition and idolatry. Neither the inſtructions of their lawgiver, nor the thunders of Sinai, nor the ſword of the heathen, nor the chains of captivity, could cure them of this perverſe ſpirit. The true prophets had always endeavoured to lead them from the obſervance of thoſe precepts which were "not good, of thoſe ſtatutes by "which a man could not live;" but in the decline of the Jewiſh nation, their public teachers, the

Scribes and Phariſees, accommodated themſelves to the prejudices of the people. They collected the various rites and traditions of antiquity, and formed them into a regular ſyſtem of ſuperſtition. They explained away the ſenſe and ſpirit of the Sacred Scriptures. They had recourſe to what they called the oral law, never committed to writing, but delivered, as they pretended, to Moſes, and from his time handed down by tradition from age to age. By this they ſubverted the moral law, and made the word of God of none effect by their traditions.

If the ſituation of the Jews called thus loudly for reformation, what might be expected in the Gentile world? If ſuch was done in the green tree, what would be done in the dry? They were without God, and without hope in the world. Their religion conſiſted entirely of ſuperſtitious obſervances, and had no connexion with virtue: their worſhip was a ſyſtem of abominable rites; their temples were haunts of lewdneſs and impiety; their gods were monſters of cruelty, rage, and all the vile paſſions which diſgrace humanity. The doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, which had been but obſcurely revealed to the Jews, was only a conjecture among the heathens. Their wiſe men ſaw the evil, but could not diſcover the remedy. They confeſſed their own ignorance, and with humble expectation looked for a prophet of the Lord, to make a revelation of the divine will to man.

Whilſt thus the people wandered in groſs darkneſs, whilſt the cloud ſat deep over the moral world, at laſt the groans of the nations reached the ears of mercy; the voice of nature mourning for her children, was heard in heaven. He who dwelleth there, roſe

from his throne. The Almighty roſe in mercy, and ſent his own Son to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Iſrael. The Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſing in our region, diſpelled the darkneſs which involved the nations, revealed all the heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. The great Prophet diſcovered the myſtery which had been kept hid from ages. He declared the whole counſel of God. He ſpoke as never man ſpake, and he lived as never man lived. His miſſion from God he proved by performing miracles and works which God only could perform; to theſe he conſtantly appealed as a teſtimony from heaven, and as the finger of God witneſſing in his behalf. Accordingly, when the high-prieſt aſked him, Art thou the Chriſt, the Son of God? He anſwered nothing. Had his diſciples been ſtanding by, they might have replied, What need is there for the inquiry? You who have the key of knowledge, ſearch the Scriptures, inquire at Moſes and the prophets who foretold and deſcribed his coming. Inquire at John the Baptiſt, whom you held to be a prophet, and who pointed him out to the people as the ſent of God. Inquire at the companions and witneſſes of his life, if an impoſtor had ever ſo many works of innocence and ſanctity. Inquire at the loſt ſheep of Iſrael whom he brought back to the path of life. Inquire at the multitude whom he fed with a few loaves. Inquire at the blind whom he reſtored to ſight. Inquire at the dumb, who now ſpeak his praiſe. Inquire at the diſeaſed whom he raiſed from the bed of affliction. Inquire at the dead whom he raiſed from their graves. Inquire at the ſeas and

tempeſts which heard and obeyed the voice of their maſter. Inquire at the heavens, which thrice opened over his head, to publiſh to the world that he was the beloved of the Father. And if theſe ſuffice you not, inquire at hell itſelf, and receive the teſtimony of the devils whom he diſpoſſeſſed,—That he was "the holy one of God."

Having thus confirmed his doctrine by his miracles; having adorned it by his life, it only remained that he ſhould ſeal it with his blood. And when now he bowed the head upon the croſs, his miſſion to Iſrael as the Author of this new revelation was finiſhed.

In the *third* place, The atonement which was requiſite for the ſins of the world was finiſhed.

As Almighty God Created the world, he claims the right of taking it under the ſuperintendency and direction of his providence. In order to attain the ends of his adminiſtration, he acts upon a fixed plan, and according to wiſe and righteous laws. If there were no fixed plan of providence, and no ſyſtem of laws to govern the world, the order of ſociety would ſoon be ſubverted, the happineſs of the human race would be deſtroyed, and the earth be reduced to one vaſt ſcene of anarchy, confuſion and uproar. That theſe laws may have their full effect, they muſt be guarded with the terrors of a penal ſanction, and when violated be put in execution, in order to intimidate offenders, and prevent tranſgreſſion in the time to come. The Judge of all the earth would not do right unleſs he executed his righteous laws, and puniſhed thoſe crimes which tended to the ſubverſion of order, and extinction of happineſs in human ſociety.

If men, then, throwing off their allegiance to Heaven, violate his righteous laws, and expoſe themſelves to his wrath and vengeance, juſtice requires that they be puniſhed for their ſins, and the honor of the Godhead is pledged for the fulfilment of the threatening denounced againſt ſin. But all of us have thus incurred the divine diſpleaſure, and become obnoxious to the ſanction of the moral law. Our firſt parents diſobeyed the divine commandments, broke the covenant of innocence, and involved us, their poſterity, in the ruins of their fall. We have added innumerable tranſgreſſions of our own to that original apoſtaſy. We have neglected the good which it was in our power to perform, and committed the evil from which God commanded us to abſtain. We have ſinned againſt the cleareſt light; in oppoſition to the greateſt goodneſs, and in the face of direct threatening, times and ways without number we have expoſed ourſelves to the wrath of God.

But it is one of the moſt obvious dictates of reaſon, that puniſhment muſt ever attend on wickedneſs, that the ſoul which ſinneth ought to die. But if ſin be thus ſeverely puniſhed, if ſinners be dealt with according to the maxims of rigorous and unrelenting juſtice, What ſhall become of the human race? Here lay the difficulty that ſtood in the way of our redemption. If, on the one hand, ſin was forgiven without ſatisfaction, and the ſinner taken into favour upon every new application for mercy, ſuch an undiſtinguiſhing exerciſe of lenity, ſuch a facility of forgiveneſs, would only ſerve to embolden offenders and multiply crimes. If, on the other hand, rigorous

juſtice held the balance, if the thunderbolt was aimed at the head of every offender, the race of men muſt periſh from the earth. Hence, the Divine Being is introduced in Scripture, as deliberating with himſelf, as being ſtraitened how to reconcile the ſeemingly jarring attributes of mercy and juſtice, and how to make the happineſs of men accord with the honor of his laws. "How ſhall I give thee up "Ephraim? How ſhall I deliver thee, O Iſrael? "How ſhall I make thee as Admah? How ſhall I "ſet thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within "me, my repentings are kindled together." Herein appears the wiſdom of that plan concerted for our redemption, through the ſacrifice of Chriſt, by which theſe ſeemingly jarring attributes are reconciled, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteouſneſs and peace kiſs each other. Hence, in that euchariſtic hymn which the angels, at the nativity of our Lord, ſung to the ſhepherds, when they aſcribed glory to God in the higheſt, they alſo proclaimed peace upon earth, and good will towards fallen man. By this atonement, all the perfections of the Deity were glorified. That immaculate purity which cannot look upon ſin, and that aſtoniſhing love which could not behold the ruin of the ſinner, were awfully diſplayed. The majeſty of the divine government was ſuſtained, the honor of the law was vindicated, juſtice, in its rigour, was ſatisfied, mercy without meaſure and without reſtraint flowed upon the children of men. The gate of the heavenly paradiſe was ſet open wide to a returning world, the angel with the flaming ſword, who guarded the tree of life, was removed, and a voice heard from the throne of mercy, "Take, eat, and live for ever."

As this doctrine concerning the atonement and ſacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, is one of the fundamental articles of our holy faith, God, in the courſe of his providence, had prepared the world for its belief and reception. A ſenſe of guilt lying upon the mind, and the fear of puniſhment from that Judge, who will render to every man according to his works, drove the ſinner to ſome expedient for atoning the wrath of an offended Deity. It is very extraordinary, that among all the people of the world, the method of making atonement for ſin was invariably the ſame. All the nations of antiquity, that are to be found in the records of hiſtory, all the modern nations whom recent diſcoveries have brought within the ſphere of our knowledge, however they may have differed in cuſtoms and manners, have univerſally and invariably agreed in making atonement for ſin by offering ſacrifices to the Deity. This fact is the more extraordinary, as ſuch a method of propitiation is not founded on nature, is not the dictate of reaſon, nor the reſult of any feelings of the human frame. If we conſult with reaſon, reaſon will tell us, that the Deity can never take any pleaſure in the tortures or in the blood of innocent animals; reaſon will tell us that it is impoſſible that the blood of bulls or of goats, or the aſhes of a heifer, can avail to ſatisfy the divine juſtice, or purify the ſoul from ſin. A practice therefore ſo univerſal, not founded on nature, nor deducible from reaſon, can be accounted for no otherwiſe, but by conſidering it as the remains of thoſe ancient traditions delivered to the deſcendants of Noah, and by them handed down to ſucceeding ages. Here we cannot but admire the wiſdom and watch-

ful care of Providence, that whilſt many other traditions periſhed in the courſe of time, and are in the gulf of oblivion, this was kept entire all over the world, in order to prepare the nations for the reception of Chriſtianity, which eſtabliſhes the capital doctrine of an atonement for ſin upon a ſacrifice.

Not only were ſacrifices in general uſe among the heathen, but alſo, among the moſt celebrated nations of antiquity, illuſtrious perſonages had ariſen, who, inſpired with generous patriotiſm, had, in caſes of danger and calamity, devoted themſelves to certain death, to ſave their country. Theſe ſelf-devoted heroes, theſe martyrs to the good of mankind, were held in admiration by their countrymen, firſt in the ſong of praiſe, and higheſt in the temple of fame. After the publication of Chriſtianity, it was no difficult taſk to transfer the praiſe and veneration which was paid to theſe temporal deliverers, to that Divine Lover of mankind, and Redeemer of our race, who offered up himſelf a ſacrifice for our ſins, and died for the happineſs of the world. Hence the atonement requiſite for the ſins of the world was finiſhed.

In the *fourth* place, The ſufferings of the Meſſiah were now finiſhed, and naught but glory was to follow.

It ſeemed expedient to Infinite Wiſdom, to ſet up the Son as head over the great family of God. It was in this capacity that he created the earth: for it is one of the doctrines revealed to us in the New Teſtament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As he, therefore, was our immediate Creator, and as his intent in our creation was defeated by ſin, there was an evident propriety, that he himſelf ſhould interpoſe in our behalf. The fall of

man was the loſs of ſo many ſubjects to Chriſt their natural Lord, in virtue of his having created them. Redeeming them, was recovering them again, was re-eſtabliſhing his power over his own works. In the epiſtle to the Coloſſians, the Apoſtle Paul runs a parallel between the relation in which Chriſt ſtands towards us as our Creator, and the new relation he acquired in virtue of his redemption. In the firſt view, he ſtyles him the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature; for by him were all things created, and by him all things conſiſt. In the ſecond view, he calls him the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the firſt-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. "For it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all "fulneſs dwell, and having made peace by the "blood of his croſs, by him to reconcile all things to "himſelf."

The ſcheme of thought which runs through the paſſage, ſeems to be this, that as we owed to Chriſt our firſt life, it was alſo expedient that we ſhould owe to him our ſecond; that, as he was the head of the creation, and made all things, ſo when God thought fit to redeem the world, it pleaſed him that Chriſt ſhould alſo be the head of this new work, the firſt-born from the dead himſelf, and the giver of life to every believer. This much we collect from the Apoſtle's reaſoning, and plainly diſcern, that the preeminence of Chriſt, as head of the church, is connected with his preeminence as head of the creation, and his being ſet over the great family of God. Jeſus Chriſt, thus conſtituted the Redeemer of mankind, and the Captain of our ſalvation in the diſcharge of his office, was to be made perfect through ſufferings.

In the preſent ſtate of humanity, the character cannot be complete without the virtues of adverſity. We are made for ſuffering, as well as for action; there are many principles in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, many qualities of the heart, which would be for ever latent, were they not called forth to action by danger and diſtreſs. There is a hidden greatneſs in the mind of man, which afflictions alone can bring to light. When we are bereft of all human help; when Heaven ſeems to forſake us, and the earth to fail beneath our feet, it is then that the ſoul aſſerts her native ſtrength, ſummons all her virtue to her aid, and exhibits to heaven and earth an object worthy of their contemplation and regard. Afflictions thus ſupported by patience, thus ſurmounted by fortitude, give the laſt finiſhing to the heroic and the virtuous character. Thus the vale of tears is the theatre of human glory; that dark cloud preſents the ſcene for all the beauties in the bow of virtue to appear. Moral grandeur, like the ſun, is brighter in the day of the ſtorm, and never is ſo truly ſublime, as when ſtruggling through the darkneſs of an eclipſe.

SERMON XXXV.

JOHN xi. 25.

I am the Reſurrection and the Life.

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

"I SAW in the right hand of him that "ſat on the throne," ſaid the Prophet of the New Teſtament,—"I ſaw in the right hand of him that "ſat on the throne, a book written within and on "the backſide, ſealed with ſeven ſeals. And I ſaw "a ſtrong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to looſe "the ſeals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in "earth, neither under the earth, was able to open "the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept "much, becauſe no man was found worthy to open, "and to read the book, neither to look thereon. "And one of the elders ſaid unto me, Weep not. "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root "of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and "to looſe the ſeven ſeals thereof."

In this myſterious manner, the Apoſtle, who aſcended in the viſions of God, and ſaw into paſt and future time, repreſents the reſtoration of mankind to life. When man had fallen from his ſtate of innocence, and all fleſh had corrupted their ways, Almighty God, with eyes that for ever overflow with love, looked down upon the earth. He beheld the world; not as he had beheld it at firſt, when the

morning ſtars ſang together, when all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy, and when he himſelf pronounced that all was fair and good; that very world he now beheld involved in confuſion and uproar; the original ſtate of things marred; the order of nature deſtroyed; the laws of Heaven overturned; his once beautiful and happy creation defaced and laid in ruins. He beheld his rational offspring, whom he had adorned with his own image, whom he had appointed to immortality, fallen from their primitive innocence, debaſed with ignorance, depraved with guilt, ſubjected to vanity, and appointed to diſſolution. Following the footſteps of ſin, which had thus laid waſte his works, he beheld *death* advancing with ſwift ſteps; extending his dominion over the nations, and ſhaking his dart in triumph over a ſubjected world. He ſaw, he pitied, and he ſaved.

Although offended with the guilty race, he would not caſt them off for ever. His time of viſitation was a time of love. In mercy to mankind he deviſed a ſcheme for our reſtoration and recovery. But man was not now, as in innocence, in a condition to treat with God by himſelf. Between ſinful duſt and aſhes, and infinite purity, there could be no communication. A Mediator, therefore, was requiſite to make peace between heaven and earth, and where was ſuch a Mediator to be found?

Accordingly, at the declaration of the gracious purpoſe of God, for the future happineſs of the world, when the book of life ſealed with its ſeven ſeals was brought forth, a ſtrong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to take the "book, and to open the ſeals thereof?" Who is

worthy to mediate between an offended God and guilty man; to unfold the ſecret purpoſe of the Moſt High, and to give life to a world that is dead? There was ſilence in heaven, and ſilence in heaven there might have been for ever; but in that moment of mercy, the criſis of our fate, the Son of God interpoſed; "I am the reſurrection and the "life, by me ſhall the world live. I will forſake "theſe manſions of glory, and dwell with men. "They who now wander in darkneſs, I will bring "to light, and life, and immortality; they are now "under ſentence of death; that ſentence ſhall be "executed on me, and I will purchaſe for them life "everlaſting; they have now gone aſtray into the "paths of perdition, I will point out to them the way "that leads to the heavens."

In this manner did Jeſus Chriſt become the reſurrection and the life. As the Prophet of the world, he gave us the aſſurance of life and immortality; as the Prieſt of the world, he purchaſed for us life and immortality; and as the King of the world, he ſet before us the path that leads to life and immortality.

In the *firſt* place, then, as the Prophet of the world, he gave us aſſurance of life and immortality.

Curioſity, or the deſire of knowledge, is one of the earlieſt and one of the ſtrongeſt emotions of the human ſoul. No ſooner does the mind arrive at maturity, but it proceeds to examine the objects around it, and to extend its reſearches wider and wider over the whole circuit of creation. With peculiar earneſtneſs man turns his attention to his own nature, and becomes the object of his own contemplation. But here clouds and darkneſs ſurround him. He

perceives himſelf a ſtranger in a wide world, where the plan of nature is very imperfectly known, where the ſyſtem of things is involved in much obſcurity, and where the Author of the univerſe is a God who hideth himſelf. Life appears to him as an intermediate ſtate, but he is ignorant of what was before it, and is as ignorant of what is to come after it. He obſerves ſymptoms of decay and marks of mortality on all the productions of nature, the human race not exempted from the general law. He ſees his friends and companions, one after another, perpetually diſappearing; he ſees mankind, generation after generation, paſſing away; paſſing to that awful abyſs to which every thing goes, and from which nothing returns. But whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlaſting darkneſs? Or do they ſtill act in another ſcene? We ſee the body incorporate with its kindred elements, and return to the duſt from whence it was taken. But what becomes of the ſoul? Does it, too, ceaſe to exiſt? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguiſhed? Is the celeſtial fire which glowed in the heart for ever quenched? Or beyond the horizon which terminates our preſent proſpect, does a more beautiful and perfect ſcene preſent itſelf, where the tears ſhall be wiped from the eyes of the mourner, where the wicked ſhall ceaſe from troubling, and the weary be at reſt?

If we conſult our affections, we ſhall be inclined to believe in a future ſtate. Nature is loth to quit its hold. The heart ſtill wiſhes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint and indulges us with the pleaſing hope of one day meeting again with the companions whom

we dropt in life. The perfections of the Deity favour theſe wiſhes of nature. If God be infinitely wiſe and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to ſee the light and to depart for ever. Would a wiſe builder have erected ſuch a noble fabric to laſt but for a moment? On the other hand, if we conſult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation ſurround us. All the works of nature ſeem only made to be deſtroyed. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The animal that mingles with the earth never riſes to life again. Appearances alſo make againſt us. The mind ſeems to depend much upon the body. The temper of the one ariſes from the ſtate of the other. When the external ſenſes decay, the faculties of the ſoul are impaired. When the blood ceaſes to flow, the ſpirit evaporates, the laſt ſtroke of the pulſe ſeems to put a final period to the whole man.

Between theſe fears and theſe wiſhes of nature, no concluſion can be drawn. After the matureſt inveſtigation, and deepeſt reaſoning, all that we arrive at is uncertainty. We ſee the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not of any morning that awaits him. The ocean ſpreads before us vaſt and dark and awful, but we know not if it will waft us to any ſhore. What a diſconſolate ſituation is this to a ſerious inquiring mind? Theſe thoughts would perplex us at all times, but if they affect us with anxiety in the gay and ſmiling ſcenes of life, how will they overwhelm us with horror, when our feet ſtumble on the dark mountains, and the ſhadows of the everlaſting evening begin to cloſe over our head? In that hour of terror and diſmay, how ſhall the

wretched man ſupport himſelf, who knows not the hope of immortality? Afflicted with the view of his paſt life, tormented with preſent pain, and hovering over an abyſs from which we know not if we ſhall ever emerge, How muſt it imbitter the laſt hour, and mingle deſpair with the pangs of diſſolution, to think on our bidding adieu to the living world; to go perhaps for ever into the dominion of darkneſs, into the region of ſhadows, into the land of forgetfulneſs, where, for any thing we can tell, we ſhall be as though we had never been! To ſuch perſons, the end of life muſt be inſupportable. Their ſetting ſun goes down in a cloud, and the long night cloſes over their head in its darkeſt and deepeſt ſhade.

But when the Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe in our region, it diſpelled the ſhadows of the everlaſting evening; revealed all the heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. Our Saviour did not propoſe his doctrines as controvertible opinions, he confirmed them by proofs and miracles. Did he teach the immortality of the ſoul, and the reſurrection of the body? As an infallible confirmation of theſe doctrines, he himſelf aroſe from the grave, and being the firſt-born from the dead himſelf, he gives life to the world. The good man need not now live in a ſtate of anxiety about his future exiſtence, or mourn for his deceaſed friends as thoſe who have no hope. We know that our Redeemer liveth; we know that we ſhall in like manner revive.

There is a time appointed, when the year of the redeemed ſhall come; when the everlaſting morning ſhall dawn; when the voice of the Son of God ſhall

pierce the caverns of the tomb; ſhall be heard over the dominions of the dead; ſhall reanimate the aſhes of all that ever lived upon the earth, and raiſe a glorious and immortal army from the boſom of corruption.

In the name, and by the authority of Him who was once dead, but is now alive, and lives for ever more, I am this day to give you the bread of life, and deliver into your hand the pledges of immortality. It is the voice which Jeſus this day addreſſes to you from theſe tables, "I am the reſurrection and the "life. He that believeth in me ſhall never die."

In the *ſecond* place, Jeſus Chriſt as the Prieſt of the world, purchaſed for us life and immortality.

When man came from the hands of his Creator he was innocent, and therefore happy and immortal. For although, in the preſent degenerate ſtate of human nature, the imperfect virtue of good men neither inſures their happineſs here, nor merits an everlaſting reward hereafter, yet if we ſuppoſe them in a ſtate of innocence or confirmed goodneſs, we can neither ſet bounds to their enjoyments or their exiſtence. The ideas of perfection and felicity are inſeparable; wherever pure virtue is, it is in paradiſe; all good beings throughout the univerſe are happy. Righteouſneſs is by its own title, immortal. The ſpring of innocence, and the fountain of life, for ever mingle their ſtreams.

Accordingly, as the world when it was firſt created, contained in it no principles of decay, ſo man, its nobleſt inhabitant, harboured in its nature no ſeeds of diſſolution. The world, if it had not been curſed, had moved on in its original beauty, freſh, in undecay-

ing vigour, and fair with perpetual youth; and man, if he had never fallen, would only have exchanged an earthly paradiſe for a heavenly one. For, as we are told, God created not death, and there was no poiſon of deſtruction in the world which he made. Immortality was a part of his image, which he conferred upon our firſt parents. Amid the garden of Eden a tree aroſe, the ſacramental pledge of life, and ſign of immortality to man. And if man had never fallen by taſting of its fruits, he would have lived for ever. But, by the fall, death entered into the world. On the day that man became a ſinner he died. The man who was made after the image of God, died; the man who was created immortal, died; and there remained a lifeleſs form, a guilty and a mortal creature, doomed to earn his bread with the ſweat of his brows, to drag out a threeſcore and ten years of wretchedneſs and pain, and then to return to the duſt from which he was taken.

How art thou fallen from heaven, ſon of the morning! How is the gold become dim, and the moſt fine gold changed! The celeſtial ſpirits, appointed the guardians of Eden, knew our firſt parents no longer, they recollected no traces of original innocence in a form ſo fallen. They diſcerned none of the lineaments of heaven in a face ſo clouded with guilt. They drove out the man; drove him out from the garden of Eden, where he had acceſs to the tree of life; drove him out from the ſociety of all thoſe good beings who were at once happy and obedient; drove him out from the preſence of the Lord, with which, in paradiſe, he had been often bleſſed.

Behold him now in his fallen ſtate! Behold, O

man! and mourn over this image. Fallen from the dignity of his nature, and in ruins; the beauty of innocence defaced; the ſplendour of heaven obſcured; cut off from the career of glory and immortality; his name eraſed from the book of life, no more to claim alliance with the Father of ſpirits, no more to rank among thoſe happy ſons of God, who preſent themſelves before the Lord; no more to behold His countenance in bliſs, in whoſe preſence there is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand there are pleaſures for evermore! Such was the ſtate into which man was brought by the fall; the ſentence of death paſſed upon him; the gate of heaven ſhut againſt him; the wrath of an offended God hung over his head. To perſons in this ſtate, what conſolation would it bring, to hear of an immortality beyond the grave, if it was to be an immortality of miſery and torment? To hear of heaven, and be caſt down to hell; to be told of the rivers of pleaſure, which are at God's right hand, while they were doomed to drink the unmingled cup of his wrath!

But the Great Reſtorer of our race, the Redeemer of mankind, not only as a Prophet, diſcovered to us a future ſtate, but alſo as a Prieſt, purchaſed for us eternal happineſs in that future ſtate. It was the guilt of our ſins that ſhut the gate of heaven againſt us, that ſubjected us to the wrath of God, and to miſery in the world to come. But Jeſus Chriſt, as our Surety and Redeemer, fulfilled that law which we had broken; endured that wrath which we had deſerved; made an atonement for thoſe ſins which we had committed; and by the righteouſneſs of his life, by the efficacy of his ſufferings, by the merit of

his death, he ſatisfied the juſtice of God; he blotted out the ſins of the world; he aboliſhed death; he purchaſed life; he quenched the fire of hell, and opened the heavens for the righteous to enter in. Thus, what the firſt Adam, the man of the earth, had loſt, the ſecond Adam, the Lord from heaven, reſtored again. By the ſacrifice of himſelf, which we are this day to commemorate, he ranſomed us from deſtruction; by his death upon the croſs, of which we are this day to renew the memorials, he purchaſed the life of the world.

Yes, O Chriſtian! the ranſom was paid. While thouſands of rams, and ten thouſand rivers of oil were inſufficient, a price of higher value was given; while the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the cattle upon a thouſand hills, were unavailable, a ſacrifice of greater efficacy was offered up. The fund of heaven was exhauſted; the treaſures of eternity were beſtowed; the blood of the Son of God was ſhed upon the croſs.—Yes, O Chriſtian! the ranſom was paid. Liberal to you is the divine benignity; free to you the bleſſing of life flows. But the anguiſh which thy Redeemer felt, when his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death; the groans which he uttered; the tears which he ſhed; the fears which came upon him in the hour of darkneſs; his bloody ſweat during his agony in the garden; the earneſt prayer which he offered up, that the cup of wrath might paſs from him for a time; his complaint of dereliction upon the croſs, when he cried, "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" Theſe teſtify at what a price the bleſſing was bought. Yes, O Chriſtian! the ranſom was paid. When

this awful event was tranſacting; when the great hour of ſacrifice was ſolemnizing, aſtoniſhment ſeized the world. All nature laboured in expectation, when the eternal life of her children was procuring. An earthquake rent aſunder the rocks, and ſhook the earth from its foundations. The ſun, beyond the courſe of nature, ſuffered eclipſe in the heavens; unuſual darkneſs, at noon, overſpread the nations; the inviſible world, through all its manſions, felt that tremendous hour. The dead aroſe from the grave. With aſtoniſhment the hoſt of heaven looked down. Man alone, for whom theſe wonders were wrought, man alone was an unconcerned ſpectator of the event.—Yes, O Chriſtian! the ranſom was paid. Behold the victim led to the ſacrifice, patient, uncomplaining, marking the way with his own blood. Who is it they drag like a murderer to Mount Calvary? Who is it they are ſtretching on a croſs, and nailing to the accurſed tree? Prince of life! Lord of glory! Saviour of men! Great High Prieſt of the world! we cannot call upon thee to come down from the croſs, for thou art now purchaſing eternal life for us!—Yes, O Chriſtian! the ranſom was paid. The ſacrifice which was offered up, was accepted by God. Jeſus, before he bowed upon the croſs, cried out, "It is finiſhed." As a full confirmation that the merit of his ſacrifice was available to purchaſe everlaſting life, he roſe from the dead on the third day, and is now aſcended up on high, to take poſſeſſion of thoſe heavens he hath purchaſed for his people, and is now preparing a place for them in thoſe manſions, which are in his Father's houſe.

In the *third* place, as the King of the world, he ſets before us the path that leads to life eternal.

Having, as a Prophet, opened up a future world to mortal view; having, as a Prieſt, purchaſed life eternal in that future world, as a King he marks out the way by which we may aſcend to take poſſeſſion of that eternal life which he hath purchaſed for us. The gate of heaven is ſet open, by his blood; but they alone who walk in the path which he hath appointed ſhall enter in. You come to theſe tables, not only to receive inſtruction from Jeſus as a Prophet, not only to profeſs your faith in him as a Prieſt, but alſo to recogniſe his authority as a Legiſlator, and to vow obedience to him as a King.

One of his firſt appearances on earth was in his legiſlative capacity. One of the firſt acts of his miniſtry was to publiſh a ſyſtem of laws for regulating the life of his diſciples. Moſes is celebrated for having been faithful in his houſe, and for having ordered every thing in his tabernacle, according to the pattern ſhowed him in the mount. No leſs faithful in his houſe was the Prophet like unto Moſes, the Miniſter of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He hath given us the pureſt and moſt effective precepts, for the regulation of our life. He hath pointed out our duty in every inſtance with ſuch clearneſs, that he that runneth may read. The King of that future world which he hath purchaſed by his death, hath made the path that leads to it, not only plain but luminous.

It ſhall come to paſs in thoſe days, ſaith the Prophet Iſaiah, (deſcribing the times of the Meſſiah), that

the " eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, the ears of " the deaf ſhall be unſtopped; the lame ſhall leap " as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſhall ſing. " For in the wilderneſs ſhall waters break out, and " ſtreams in the deſert.—And a highway ſhall be " there, and it ſhall be called the way of holineſs; " the unclean ſhall not paſs over it; but the redeem- " ed ſhall walk there, and wayfaring men, though " fools, ſhall not err therein." Such is the perfection of the Chriſtian law; ſuch the purity of thoſe morals which Jeſus delivered; ſuch the beauty of the Goſpel, as a rule of life, as to have gained the love and admiration of many who have diſbelieved its doctrines. But he gave them a ſtill higher luſtre by his example. The perfection of the Chriſtian law, the purity of thoſe morals which Jeſus delivered, the beauty of the Goſpel, as a rule of life, appear no where to ſuch advantage, as in the life of our Lord. There you contemplate holineſs, not as a dead letter, but as a living form; ſubſtantial, preſent, ſpeaking to the world. He trode before you the path that leads to heaven. It is pointed out by his precepts; it is marked by his example; it is conſecrated by his blood.

Would you learn what virtue is, would you be in love with virtue, would you practiſe virtue, contemplate the life of Jeſus; ſtudy the life of Jeſus; imitate the life of Jeſus. He to whom the Jews preferred a robber and a murderer, was fairer in his life than the ſons of men, and purer in his heart than the angels of God. That head which they crowned with thorns, was ever intent on benevolent deeds, and at that very moment of time meditated their good.

Thoſe feet which they bound to the croſs, went about on errands of mercy. Thoſe hands which they nailed to the accurſed tree, were lifted up in devotion to God, or ſtretched out in beneficence to men. Jeſus, through his whole life, marked out the path which leads to the heavens. Walk in that path, Chriſtians! You ſhall arrive at heaven; and be of that happy number, who are to inhabit the manſions prepared for you, by Him who is "the reſurrection "and the life."

LECTURE I*.

PSALM i.

1 *Bleſſed is the man that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful.*

2 *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

3 *And he ſhall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his ſeaſon; his leaf alſo ſhall not wither, and whatſoever he doth ſhall proſper.*

4 *The ungodly are not ſo: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*

5 *Therefore the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in the judgment, nor ſinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

6 *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly ſhall periſh.*

CHRISTIANS and Brethren! The moſt critical period of human life is when we ſet out into the world. Frequently the firſt ſtep is deciſive. The young adventurer, ſet free from the authority of parents and of guardians, becomes his own maſter, and follows his own inclination. It is then that he

* A LECTURE is a ſtated part in the MORNING SERVICE of the Church of Scotland, and follows immediately after the firſt prayer. The miniſter reads ſome paſſage of Scripture, conſiſting for the moſt part of a conſiderable number of verſes; theſe he ſucceſſively explains, and, where neceſſary, illuſtrates them, not only from the context, but both from ſacred and profane hiſtory. Beſides making obſervations upon each verſe, he generally, upon concluding, draws moral inferences from the whole.

It is obvious, that the practice of LECTURING muſt, on thoſe accounts, not only give ſcope to the learning of the preacher, and to his talent for bringing many particulars into one or a few points of view; but muſt tend, at the ſame time, to make the people more acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, and to derive, from the experience of paſt times, very uſeful inſtructions with regard to life.

begins to form his character; and the character that is then formed generally laſts through life. Mankind for the moſt part continue in the ſame path in which they ſet out. The paſſions of youth may reſign to the paſſions of age, and one ſet of vices or of virtues give place to thoſe of a ſimilar kind; but ſeldom does the formed character undergo an eſſential change. Our firſt ſteps ought therefore to be ordered with the greateſt care and deliberation, as upon them, in a great meaſure, depends not only our preſent, but alſo our eternal happineſs.

It was with a deſign to direct us in this important period, that the Pſalm before us was written; in which the practice of righteouſneſs is recommended, not only from the advantages attending it in this life, and in that which is to come, but likewiſe from the pernicious tendency of ſin to embitter our earthly enjoyments, and to render us unqualified for inheriting the joys of heaven. The gradual deviation of a ſinner from the onward path of virtue, till he is inextricably bewildered in the inſidious mazes and winding ways of iniquity, are here moſt beautifully deſcribed.

The firſt ſtep in reality, though it be the ſecond in the deſcription, is, *He ſtandeth in the way of ſinners.* Frequenting the company of the wicked is a certain introduction to a life of wickedneſs. Mankind are oftener led aſtray by the company of the profligate than by their own depraved inclinations. This unhappy bias to aſſociate with the profane ariſes from two cauſes, which operate powerfully on the minds of inexperienced youth. The firſt is that rigorouſneſs and auſterity which ſome gloomy-minded Chriſ-

tians attach to their religion. There are many perſons of ſuch an unhappy conſtitution, as to indulge themſelves in perpetual moroſeneſs and melancholy. Thoſe ſons of ſorrow turn every houſe into a houſe of mourning, and behave in life as if it were one of their principles, that mirth was made for reprobates, and cheerfulneſs of heart denied to all thoſe who have the beſt title to be cheerful. My brethren, there is no connection; God and nature have eſtabliſhed no connection, between ſanctity of character and ſeverity of manners. To rejoice evermore, is not only the privilege, but is alſo the duty of a Chriſtian. A cheerful temper is a perpetual hymn to the Divinity. A gloomy caſt of mind is not only a certain ſource of miſery and diſcontent, but is really in itſelf ſinful, by deterring others from a holy life, by repreſenting religion in an unfavourable and forbidding light, as if it conjured up a ſpirit to darken the face of the heavens and the earth, to trouble the peace and the harmony of nature, and to baniſh gladneſs from the circle of human ſociety. Very oppoſite is the conduct of the votaries of vice. To betray unwary innocence into their ſnares, they put on the maſk of mirth; they counterfeit gladneſs amidſt the horrors of guilt, and borrow the accents of pleaſure, and the air of joy. "Let us crown our-"ſelves with roſebuds," ſay they, "let us crown "ourſelves with roſebuds before they be withered, "let no flower of the ſpring paſs away, let us devote "the preſent moments to joy, and give thought and "care to the winds." By their flattery and fair ſpeeches, too often are the innocent enſnared. They mark the fair attire, and the ſmiles upon the cheek

of the deceiver, Senſual pleaſure; but they diſcern not, till too late, the pains, the diſeaſes, and the deſtruction that follow in her train. They diſcern not that her ſteps lead down to the grave, and that her bower is an antichamber to hell.

There is a ſecond cauſe which has often been known to make men aſſociate with the profane, and that is, an opinion that wickedneſs, particularly ſome kinds of it, are manly and becoming; that diſſoluteneſs, infidelity, and blaſphemy, are indications of a ſprightly and a ſtrong mind. By the moſt unhappy of all aſſociations, they join together the ideas of religion and dulneſs; and if they have a good opinion of a man's faith and his morals, they are led to have a very bad one of his underſtanding. This opinion, although it has gained ground where it might not have been expected, is without foundation in nature or in fact. Some inſtances there may have been of great men who have been irregular; but the experience of ages is on the other ſide. Thoſe who have ſhone in all ages as the lights of the world; the moſt celebrated names that are recorded in the annals of fame; legiſlators, the founders of ſtates, and the fathers of their country, on whom ſucceeding ages have looked back with filial reverence; patriots, the guardians of the laws, who have ſtemmed the torrent of corruption in every age; heroes, the ſaviours of their country, who have returned victorious from the field of battle, or more than victorious, who have died for their country; philoſophers, who have opened the book of nature, and explained the wonders of almighty power; bards, who have ſung the praiſes of virtue and of vir-

tuous men, whoſe ſtrains carry them down to immortality; with a few exceptions, have been uniformly on the ſide of goodneſs, and have been as diſtinguiſhed in the temple of virtue as they were illuſtrious in the temple of fame. It was one of the maxims which governed their lives, that there is nothing in nature which can compenſate wickedneſs; that although the rewards and puniſhments, which influence illiberal and ungenerous minds, were ſet aſide; that although the thunders of the Almighty were huſhed, and the gates of paradiſe were open no more, they would follow religion and virtue for their own ſake, and co-operate with eternal Providence in perpetual endeavours to favour the good, to depreſs the bad, and to promote the happineſs of the whole creation.

The ſecond ſtage in the perverſion of a ſinner, is *walking after the counſel of the ungodly*. It is a maxim eſtabliſhed by the ſad experience of ages, that evil communication corrupts good manners. The power of nature and of conſcience, and the influence of a religious education, may, for a while, withſtand the ſhock, but theſe gradually will be overpowered, and yield to the impetuoſity of the torrent. Hence follow the painful ſtruggles between reaſon and the ſenſes, between conſcience and inclination, which conſtitute a ſtate of the utmoſt miſery and torment. Such perſons, when they are carouſing in the gay circle of their acquaintance, when the blood is warm, and the ſpirits high, will then go all lengths with their fellow-debauchees, and give a looſe to every wanton and every wicked deſire. But when the fumes of intoxication have forſaken the aching head;

when the calm forenoon hour of reflection comes, then conſcience, faithful to its truſt, ſummons them to her awful bar, fills them with confuſion and remorſe, and condemns them to the ſevereſt of all tortures, to be extended on the rack of reflection, to lie upon the torture of the mind. This is a ſtate in which great part of mankind live and die. They have as much corruption as to lead them to the commiſſion of new ſins, and as much religion as to awaken in them remorſe for theſe ſins. They repent of their old vicious pleaſures, and at the ſame time are laying plans for new ones, and make their lives one continued courſe of ſinning and repenting, of tranſgreſſion and remorſe.

The third and laſt ſtage of impiety is *ſitting in the chair of the ſcorner*, or laughing at all religion and virtue. This is a pitch of diabolical attainment, to which few arrive. It requires a double portion of the infernal ſpirit, and a long experience in the myſtery of iniquity, to become callous to every ſenſe of religion, of virtue, and of honor; to throw off the authority of nature, of conſcience, and of God; to overleap the barrier of laws divine and human; and to endeavour to wreſt the bolt from the red right-hand of the Omnipotent. Difficult as the achievement is, we ſee it ſometimes effected. We have ſeen perſons who have gloried in their ſhame, and boaſted of being vicious for the ſake of vice. Such characters are monſters in the moral world. Figure to yourſelves, my brethren, the anguiſh, the horror, the miſery, the damnation, ſuch a perſon muſt endure, who muſt conſider himſelf in a ſtate of enmity with heaven and with earth; who has no pleaſant reflec-

tions from the paſt, no peace in the preſent, no hopes from the future; who muſt conſider himſelf as a ſolitary being in the world; who has no friends without to pour balm in the cup of bitterneſs he is doomed to drink; who has no friend above to comfort him, when there is none to help; and who has nought within him to compenſate for that irreparable and irredeemable loſs. Such a perſon is as miſerable as he is wicked. He is inſenſible to every emotion of friendſhip; he is loſt to all ſenſe of honor; he is ſeared to every feeling of virtue.

In the claſs of thoſe who ſit in the chair of the ſcorner, we may include the whole race of infidels, who miſemploy the engines of reaſon or of ridicule to overthrow the Chriſtian religion. Were the diſpute concerning a ſyſtem of ſpeculative opinions, which of themſelves were of no importance to the happineſs of mankind, it would be uncharitable to include them all under this cenſure. But on the Chriſtian religion, not only the happineſs but the virtue of mankind depends. It is an undoubted fact, that religion is the ſtrongeſt principle of virtue with all men, and with nine-tenths of mankind is the only principle of virtue. Any attempt therefore to deſtroy it, muſt be conſidered as an attempt againſt the happineſs and againſt the virtue of the human kind. If the heathen philoſophers did not attempt to ſubvert the falſe religion of their country, but, on the contrary, gave it the ſanction of their example, becauſe, bad as it was, it had conſiderable influence on the manners of the people, and was better than no religion at all, what ſhame, what contempt, what infamy, ought they to incur, who endeavour to over-

throw a religion which contains the nobleſt ideas of the Deity, and the pureſt ſyſtem of morals, that ever were taught upon earth? He is a traitor to his country; he is a traitor to the human kind; he is a traitor to Heaven, who abuſes the talents that God has given him, in impious attempts to wage war againſt Heaven, and to undermine that ſyſtem of religion, which, of all things, is the beſt adapted to promote the happineſs and the perfection of the human kind. Bleſſed then is the man who hath not brought himſelf into this ſinful and miſerable ſtate, who hath held faſt his innocence and integrity in the midſt of a degenerate world; or if, in ſome unguarded hour, he hath been betrayed into an imprudent ſtep, or overtaken in a fault, hath made ample amends for his folly by a life of penitence and of piety.

VERSE 2. *His delight is in the law of the Lord.* He makes religion and virtue the grand buſineſs of his life, and his buſineſs becomes his delight. He does not take it up occaſionally, and by fits and ſtarts, it is his employment *day and night.* In the morning he riſeth with the ſun, and joins with the choir of angels and archangels in celebrating the great Creator. He looks around him with a pious pleaſure on the living landſcape which the hand of the Almighty hath drawn for his delight, and he adores that benevolent power who makes all nature beauty to his eye, and muſic to his ear; but he has a fairer proſpect within, than nature can furniſh without, and the ſtill ſmall voice of conſcience whiſpers peace to his heart in ſweeter ſtrains than all the muſic of the morning, which hails him on every ſide. With a cheerful and a grateful heart, he contemplates the

wonders of creating bounty, he recollects the inſtances of preſerving goodneſs, and he traces the annals of redeeming love. He looks through the veil of created things, and raiſes his thoughts from this world to that ſtate of happineſs and immortality which is reſerved for the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. His religion does not conſiſt in contemplation alone. He goeth about doing good. He inſtructs the ignorant in the light that leads to heaven; he pours the balm of conſolation into the wounded mind; and he wipes the tears from the cheeks of the diſtreſſed. He diſtinguiſhes every day with ſome good, ſome memorable deed; and he retires to reſt with that inward, ſerene, and heartfelt joy, that ſober certainty of bliſs, which is only to be found in a life of holineſs and of piety.

VERSE 3. *And he ſhall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his ſeaſon; his leaf alſo ſhall not wither, and whatſoever he doth ſhall proſper.* A tree planted by the rivers of water, is a beautiful object in all nations; but to the Jews, who lived in a hot country, and were ſcorched with the heat of the ſun, it was an object both of ſignal beauty and of ſignal utility, by affording them a ſhadow from the heat. Hence, when they deſcribe mankind in their happieſt ſtate, they repreſent them as ſitting under their vines and their fig-trees. This alluſion expreſſeth well the flouriſhing ſtate of the righteous man. Planted in the garden of his God, and watered with the dew of heaven, his leaf is ever green, and he brings forth the fruits of righteouſneſs in due ſeaſon. His goodneſs is liberal and unconfined, and his beneficence is ſhared promiſ-

cuouſly by friends and foes. He is clothed with righteouſneſs, and his judgment is a robe and a diadem. The ear that hears him bleſſeth, and the eye that ſees him gives witneſs to him, becauſe he delivereth the poor, the fatherleſs, and them that have none to help. He is eyes to the blind. He is feet to the lame. The loins of the naked bleſs him. The bleſſing of him that is ready to periſh comes upon him, and he cauſes the widow's heart to ſing for joy.

All he doth ſhall proſper well. Among the Jews, to whom this Pſalm was addreſſed, this held invariably true. There was a particular diſpenſation of providence exerciſed towards that people, diſtributing temporal rewards to righteouſneſs, and temporal puniſhments to ſin. In the ordinary courſe of providence now, this does not always hold. Succeſs and diſappointment are adminiſtered variouſly to the ſons of men. But ſtill, in all his endeavours, the good man bids the faireſt for ſucceſs. While he acts in character, he will attempt nothing but what is juſt and honorable in itſelf, or beneficial to the intereſts of ſociety; he will always have the good wiſhes of mankind on his ſide. And although he ſhould ſometimes be diſappointed, the conſcious neſs of his good intentions will keep his mind at eaſe, and his faith in the good providence of his heavenly Father, will fill him with a contentment and peace of mind, that is a ſtranger to the breaſt of the wicked man, even when he obtains his wiſhes.

Verse 4. *The ungodly are not ſo: But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.* The Pſalmiſt hits upon the diſtinguiſhing feature in the character of a

wicked man. He never acts upon a plan. He lives and acts at random. He has no rule for his life but the veerings of paſſion. Preſent gratification being his only object, different and contrary paſſions ſolicit him at the ſame time. One appetite ſaith unto him, Go, and he goeth, another ſays, Come, and he cometh. The ſlave of ſenſe, and the ſport of paſſion, he is driven to and fro like the chaff before the whirlwind, and his life is one continued ſcene of levity, inconſiſtency and folly.

VERSES 5. and 6. *Therefore the ungodly ſhall not ſtand in the judgment, nor ſinners in the congregation of the righteous.—For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : But the way of the ungodly ſhall periſh.* The miſeries which the wicked endure here, are but the beginning of their ſorrows. That God, whoſe grace they abuſed, whoſe mercy they undervalued, and whoſe power they deſpiſed, is now their awful and inexorable Judge. The wicked have no cauſe to complain of the ſentence that is paſſed upon them. They have brought it upon their own heads. They have been the inſtruments of their own ruin. They have brought themſelves into a ſituation in which it is impoſſible for them to be happy. Let us ſuppoſe them to be admitted into the company of the bleſſed, their ſituation would be ſtill deplorable. They would pine in the manſions of bliſs, and ſearch for heaven in the midſt of paradiſe. We may venture to ſay, that it is even impoſſible for Omnipotence to make a wicked man happy; it implies an expreſs contradiction. They have put themſelves out of the reach of divine mercy, and become what the Scripture moſt emphatically calls, "Veſſels of wrath fit-

" ted for deſtruction." " Therefore they ſhall not " ſtand in the judgment." The poor and diſtreſſed whom they refuſed to relieve, the widow and the fatherleſs whom they oppreſſed, the innocent whom they injured, the unhappy wretches whom, by their artifices, they betrayed into the paths of deſtruction, ſhall riſe up and witneſs againſt them. Their own hearts will condemn them. The final ſentence is pronounced, they are driven from the preſence of the Lord, they are caſt into outer darkneſs, where the worm dieth not, where the fire is never quenched, and it had been happy for them that they had never been born.

I ſhall conclude with one reflection. You ſee, my brethren, from what has been ſaid, that a life of wickedneſs is gradual and progreſſive. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till, by degrees, the whole ſuper-ſtructure of iniquity is complete. When the ſinner has once put forth his hand to the forbidden fruit, and thinks that he can taſte and live, he returns with greater and greater avidity to repeat his crimes, till the poiſon ſpreads through all his veins, and all the balm of Gilead be ineffectual for his cure. Fly therefore, I call upon you in the name of Heaven, fly, from the approaching foe. Guard your innocence as you would guard your life. If you advance one ſtep over the verge of virtue, unleſs the grace of Heaven interpoſe, down you ſink to the bottomleſs abyſs. Come not then near the territories of danger. Stand back. One ſin indulged, gathers ſtrength and abounds; it increaſes, it multiplies, it familiarizes itſelf with our frame, and introduces its whole brood of infernal inmates, worſe than peſtilence, famine or ſword.

LECTURE II.

PSALM XXIV.

1 *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.*

2 *For he hath founded it upon the ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods.*

3 *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord? and who ſhall ſtand in his holy place?*

4 *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his ſoul unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully.*

5 *He ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, and righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation.*

6 *This is the generation of them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*

7 *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors, and the King of glory ſhall come in.*

THIS Pſalm was compoſed when David removed the ark of the covenant from the houſe of Obededom to Jeruſalem. But though it was compoſed for that occaſion, it is evident, from the latter part of it, that it was ultimately intended for that more illuſtrious event, when Solomon transferred the ark from the tabernacle into the temple which he had built. As David was not only the Poet, but alſo the Prophet of God, he foreſaw the future events of the Church, by the inſpiration of the Divine Spirit; and by the ſame inſpiration, he compoſed ſongs and pieces of muſic adapted to theſe events. Theſe he committed to Aſaph, Hemon, and Jeduthum, the prefects of ſacred poetry, to be ſung as opportunities required.

The occaſion of this pſalm is one of the grandeſt and moſt illuſtrious that any where occurs in hiſtory. Solomon, by the divine direction, had now finiſhed the temple, that ſuperb monument of oriental magnificence and glory, which drew the princes of neighbouring nations to come and contemplate. The feaſt of tabernacles, the moſt ſolemn and moſt frequented of the Jewiſh feſtivals, was now at hand. All the tribes of Iſrael, from Dan to Beerſheba, were now aſſembled at Jeruſalem to the feaſt. It was then that Solomon proceeded to dedicate the temple, and to fix the ark in its appointed place. The proceſſion to the temple was grand and triumphant. Solomon, arrayed in all his glory, attended with the elders of Iſrael, and the heads of the tribes went before; after him marched the prieſts in their ſacerdotal robes, bearing the ark; to them ſucceeded the four thouſand ſacred muſicians, clothed in white robes, and divided into claſſes, ſome of them ſinging with the voice, others playing upon harps and trumpets, and pſalteries and cymbals, and other inſtruments of muſic; behind them followed the whole congregation, with palms in their hands, rejoicing and wondering. Solomon had, on this occaſion, made an oblation of twenty-two thouſand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thouſand ſheep, of which the Almighty teſtified his approbation and acceptance, by cauſing the ſacred fire to come down anew from heaven, and conſume the ſacrifice. The Prieſts and Levites, as they went along, ſprinkled the ground with the blood of the victims, and perfumed the air with frankincenſe and ſweet odours. This, with the fumes of incenſe which roſe in clouds from the al-

tars, had diffuſed ſuch a potent perfume through the air, that people at a diſtance reflected on the breath they drew as a celeſtial influence, and regarded the ſtrains of harmony which they heard, as ſomething more than mortal; actually imagining that the God of the Hebrews had deſcended from his heaven to take poſſeſſion of the temple which they had dedicated to his ſervice. Nor were they miſtaken. For after the prieſts had carried the ark into the holy of holies, had placed it between the cherubims, and had reverently withdrawn, the cloud of divine glory deſcended and reſted upon the houſe. The Shechinah or divine preſence took up its abode in the moſt holy place. Animated by this ſublime occaſion, the Pſalmiſt begins his ode with celebrating the dominion of the Deity over this vaſt univerſe, and all its inhabitants, and ſetting forth their entire ſubjection to his power and providence.

VERSE 1. and 2. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. —For he hath founded it upon the ſeas, and eſtabliſhed it upon the floods.* David aſcertains the ſovereignty of God over the world, and its ſubjection to him, from his having created it at firſt; from his having eſtabliſhed it upon the ſeas, and founded it upon the floods. By this he oppoſes the ſceptics and infidels of thoſe times, who withdrew nature from the Divinity, and denied the interpoſition of Providence in human affairs: by this he diſtinguiſhes the God whom he adored, from the idols of the Gentiles around him, who were confined to one part or province of nature: by this he endeavours to inſpire the Jews with gratitude and love to their God and King,

who choſe them from among all the nations whom he governs by his providence, to be his favourite people, the object of his particular providence, and peculiar loving-kindneſs. The Pſalmiſt next determines where that God whoſe perfections he had been deſcribing was to be worſhipped, and which of his worſhippers were to be the objects of his favour and approbation.

VERSE 3. *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the Lord? and who ſhall ſtand in his holy place?* It was uſual among the Jews to add the name of God to any thing that was great, that was wonderful, and of which they would give us a high idea. Lofty cedars in Scripture, are called the trees of the Lord: high hills are called the mountains of God: wine, on account of its generous, joyous, and exhilarating qualities, is ſaid to cheer the heart of God and man. In this place, the phraſe is not to be taken in its uſual ſenſe. By the hill of God, is here meant the hill of Zion, which the Almighty had choſen to be the place of his worſhip, and where he had commanded his temple to be built. Near the ſame tract of ground there were three hills. Zion, where the city and caſtle of David ſtood; Moriah, where the temple was built, and Calvary, where our Saviour was crucified; but theſe, for the moſt part, went under the general name of Zion. By the phraſes of aſcending into the hill of God, and ſtanding in his holy place, the Pſalmiſt would point out the perſons who are to be admitted to worſhip God in his temple here, and in conſequence of that, to be received into the temple of his glory above, and to dwell for ever with the Lord. We have the character and qualities of theſe perſons expreſſed in the following verſe.

VERSE 4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his ſoul unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully.* It is very obſervable, that in aſcertaining the qualifications of the citizens of the ſpiritual Jeruſalem, the Pſalmiſt does not ſo much as mention the external obſervances, the coſtly and laborious rites of the ceremonial law, in which the Iſraelites generally prided themſelves, but dwells alone on the great and eſſential duties of morality, which are of univerſal and eternal obligation. The fond affection and attachment of the Jews to the rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic law, ſo as to neglect other duties, is the more remarkable, as God, by the mouth of his Prophets, frequently declared that he had no pleaſure in them, calling them precepts which were not good, and ſtatutes by which a man could not live. In the fiftieth Pſalm, we have an expreſs declaration to this purpoſe; "Hear, O my people, and "I will ſpeak; O Iſrael, and I will teſtify againſt "thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove "thee for thy ſacrifices, or for thy burnt-offerings, "to have been continually before me. I will take "no bullock out of thy houſe, nor he-goats out of "thy folds. For every beaſt of the foreſt is mine, "and the cattle upon a thouſand hills. I know all "the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beaſts of "the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not "tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fulneſs "thereof. Will I eat the fleſh of bulls, or drink the "blood of goats? Offer unto God thankſgiving, "and pay thy vows unto the Moſt High, and call "upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver "thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." The qualifica-

tions here required are thoſe of the heart and the life, "Clean hands and a pure heart." It is not enough that we waſh our hands in innocence before men, we muſt be pure in heart before the eyes of infinite perfection. True religion is the religion of the heart; it is a principle dwelling in the mind, that extends its influence through the whole man, and regulates the life. Unleſs our religion enter into the heart, we have no religion at all. The form of godlineſs is inſufficient and unavailing without the power thereof. We can never attain to the true beauties of holineſs, unleſs, like the king's daughter, we be all glorious within. On the other hand, when clean hands and a pure heart are united in the ſame perſon; when a converſation without blame, and a conſcience void of offence, coincide, they are in the ſight of God of great price. A life ſacred to devotion and virtue, ſacred to the practice of truth and undefiled religion, joined to a heart, pure, pious, and benevolent, conſtitute an offering more acceptable at the altars of the Moſt High God, than whole hecatombs of burnt-offerings, and a thouſand hills of frankinceſne in a flame.

By *lifting up the ſoul unto vanity*, the Pſalmiſt means making riches and honor, thoſe vanities of the world, the object of our affection and purſuit; ſaying to the gold, thou art our truſt, or to the moſt fine gold, thou art our confidence. Or it may mean the worſhipping of idols, which, in Scripture, go under the denomination of vanity, as in Jeremiah, "Are "there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that "can cauſe rain?" *Swearing deceitfully*, includes all manner of perjury. This vice is always repreſented

in Scripture in the moſt dreadful colours. He that ſweareth falſely, and he that feareth an oath, is an equivalent term for the wicked and the righteous. As an oath is the greateſt pledge of veracity, and the end of all ſtrife, general and cuſtomary violations of it muſt have the moſt pernicious effect upon ſociety. Such a practice would entirely baniſh religious principles from the world; it would diſſolve the bands of ſociety, it would ſhake the fundamental pillars of mutual truſt and confidence among men, and deſtroy the ſecurity ariſing from the laws themſelves. For human laws and human ſanctions cannot extend to numberleſs caſes in which the ſafety of mankind is eſſentially concerned. They would prove but feeble and ineffectual means of preſerving the order and peace of ſociety, if there were no checks upon men, from the ſenſe of divine legeſlation; if no belief of divine rewards and puniſhments came in aid of what human rewards and puniſhments ſo imperfectly provide for. We have, in the next verſe, the rewards promiſed to the perſons poſſeſſed of theſe qualifications.

VERSE 5. *He ſhall receive the bleſſing from the Lord, even righteouſneſs from the God of his ſalvation.* This alludes to the appointed cuſtom of the Jewiſh prieſts, who, on ſolemn and ſtated occaſions, were wont to bleſs the people. Their form of bleſſing we have preſcribed in Numbers vi. 22. "And the Lord ſpake "unto Moſes, ſaying, Speak unto Aaron and unto "his ſons, ſaying, On this wiſe ſhall ye bleſs the peo- "ple of Iſrael, the Lord bleſs thee and keep thee; "the Lord make his face to ſhine upon thee, and "be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his coun- "tenance upon thee, and give thee peace." But as

the prieſt was a fallible creature, his bleſſing might be indiſcriminately beſtowed, and fail of its effect. But the perſon who hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lift up his ſoul unto vanity, nor ſworn deceitfully, ſhall receive the bleſſing from God himſelf, whoſe favour is better than life, and whoſe bleſſing maketh rich, and addeth no ſorrow. Theſe bleſſings are ſummed up in the eighty-fourth Pſalm, "The Lord God is a ſun and ſhield; the Lord will "give grace and glory; no good thing will he with-"hold from them that walk uprightly." *Righteouſneſs from the God of our ſalvation*, may either mean the reward of righteouſneſs, as the work in Scripture is frequently put for the reward; or it may mean kindneſs, mercy, and the benefits from righteouſneſs, as in 1 Sam. xii. 7. "Now therefore ſtand ſtill, that "I may reaſon with you before the Lord, of all the "righteouſneſſes of the Lord, which he did to you "and your fathers:" where it is evident, from what follows, that by righteouſneſſes of the Lord, he means the deliverances that God had wrought for them.

VERSE 6. *This is the generation of them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face, O Jacob*, or, *O God of Jacob*, as it might better be rendered. This is the generation, who, in obedience to the commandments of God, and in the methods of his appointment, ſeek his face, that is, his favour and friendſhip, and to whom he never ſaid, "Seek ye my face in vain."

Animated by his ſubject, the Pſalmiſt proceeds to higher ſtrains, and, in the ſublime ſpirit of eaſtern poetry, calls upon the gates of the temple to open and admit the triumphal proceſſion.

VERSE 7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye*

lift up, ye everlaſting doors, and the King of glory ſhall come in. To illuſtrate this part of the Pſalm, we muſt take a ſhort view of the Hebrew pſalmody. The Pſalms of David are of various kinds. Some of them are dramatic, having ſpeakers introduced, making a kind of muſical dialogue. Of this the ninety-firſt Pſalm is a remarkable inſtance. In the firſt verſe, the high-prieſt, riſing up, declares the happineſs of him who putteth his truſt in the Almighty. In the ſecond verſe, David himſelf, or one of the ſingers, repreſenting the faithful among the Jews, declares his faith and confidence in God From the third to the fourteenth, the ode was performed by the ſacred ſingers, both with the voice and inſtruments of muſic. The three laſt verſes were ſpoken by the high-prieſt alone in the character of God Almighty.

Many of the Pſalms are intended to be ſung by two diviſions of the ſacred ſingers, the chorus and the ſemichorus. Such is the Pſalm before us. Every verſe is divided into two members, exactly of the ſame length, and generally repreſenting the ſame thought, expreſſed in a different manner. "The "earth is the Lord's and the fulneſs thereof;—the "world and they that dwell therein." When we come to the ſeventh, the verſe is evidently altered. The verſes are not divided into two members as before, and for a very good reaſon. The ſemichorus aſked the queſtion, and the chorus made the reply. Apoſtrophes, or addreſſes to inanimate nature, are among the boldeſt figures in poetry, and when properly introduced, as in this place, are in the higheſt manner productive of beauty. The ſimple

thought, when ſtripped of its poetical ornaments, is no more than this: When the prieſts had carried the ark to the temple, Solomon ordered the gates to be thrown open to admit the ark. How much this thought is improved, when embelliſhed by the fine imagination of the ſweet ſinger of Iſrael, and clothed in all the graces of poetry, let perſons of the ſmalleſt critical diſcernment judge. In ſhort, the paſſage is too well known, and too beautiful, to need or admit of any illuſtration. Like the meridian ſun, it ſhines in its own light, and to endeavour to adorn it, were waſteful and ridiculous exceſs.

As we are aſſured by an authority that cannot err, that the ceremonies of the Jewiſh law were a figure of good things to come, and as the ark has been conſidered as a type of our Saviour, it is highly probable, that its introduction into the temple prefigured to the faithful among the Jews, that ſolemn and triumphant period when our Saviour aſcended into the heaven of heavens, to take poſſeſſion of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

LECTURE III.

LUKE xvi. 19—31.

19 *There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day.*

20 *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of ſores,*

21 *And deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his ſores.*

22 *And it came to paſs that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom: the rich man alſo died, and was buried.*

23 *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom.*

24 *And he cried, and ſaid, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and ſend Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

25 *But Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveds thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

26 *And beſides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: ſo that they who would paſs from hence to you, cannot; neither can they paſs to us, that would come from thence.*

27 *Then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldſt ſend him to my father's houſe:*

28 *For I have five brethren; that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo come into this place of torment.*

29 *Abraham ſaith unto him, They have Moſes and the prophets; let them hear them.*

30 *And he ſaid, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

31 *And he ſaid unto him, If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.*

THE method of inſtruction by parables, was much in uſe among the eaſtern nations. Both phyſical and moral cauſes contributed to intro-

duce and to support this cuſtom. The people of the eaſt have always been more under the government of the imagination and fancy, than the nations of the north. They uſe the liveliſt and the boldeſt figures of ſpeech in their ordinary converſation; and their writings are all in the manner as well as in the ſpirit of poetry. What the influence of the climate made natural, the form of their government rendered neceſſary. As the form of their government has always been deſpotic and tyrannical, they were afraid to ſpeak out their ſentiments with openneſs and with freedom. Truth durſt not approach the throne, nor appear in public.

Such was the origin of parables. This method of inſtruction poſſeſſes many advantages. It is obvious to all capacities, and has a charm for every hearer. It is well adapted to ſtrike the fancy; it intereſts the paſſions, and thus makes a deeper and more laſting impreſſion than mere moral inſtruction could convey. It likewiſe poſſeſſes one advantage peculiar to itſelf. It makes a man his own inſtructor. When the parable is told, we ourſelves draw the moral, and make the application. Obſervations and reflections that we make ourſelves, are of more avail to us in the conduct of life, than any inſtruction we can learn from others.

The parable now before us contains many uſeful and important leſſons. We have here repreſented two characters not uncommon in the world; a rich man, who enjoyed the pleaſures and the luxuries of life, and a poor beggar, who lived and who died in poverty, and in diſtreſs. This man was a ſignal object of pity. He was a beggar, and he was full of

ſores. Notwithſtanding this double call to ſympathy and compaſſion, the heart of the rich man was hardened againſt him. All the advantage he reaped from lying at the great man's gate, was, that his dogs, who had more feeling than their maſter, came and licked his ſores. Nevertheleſs this rich man was not a miſer. He was not a niggard of the gifts of Providence. He enjoyed life. He was arrayed in purple, which, in thoſe days, was the veſtment of kings. Hoſpitality preſided in his hall, and luxury reigned at his table. He made ſumptuous entertainments for his friends, and he made them every day. He ſeems to have been one of that claſs of men, and a very numerous claſs they are, and very frequently to be found in life, who are very hoſpitable to thoſe who do not want, but very unfriendly to thoſe that do; who prepare rich and ſplendid entertainments for thoſe tribes of flatterers and ſycophants who always crowd the manſions of the great, and at the ſame time have nothing to ſpare to a real object of diſtreſs. However, he acted very agreeably to the principles of his ſect; for, as we learn from the ſequel, he was a Sadducee, or what in our days we call an infidel, that is, one who has no religion at all. He did not believe in the immortality of the ſoul. He did not believe that there was either a heaven or a hell. Accordingly, he endeavoured to make the moſt of this life, and acted up to the maxims of his ſect, "Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we ſhall "die."

Learn hence the folly and the danger of endeavouring to eſtabliſh virtue upon any foundation but that of true religion. People may tell us that ſocial

affection is the law of our being; they may talk of virtue being its own reward; they may ſing the praiſes of diſintereſted benevolence; but if you take away the rewards and puniſhments of the world to come, you ſet the greateſt part of mankind free from every moral obligation, and open a door to univerſal depravity and corruption of manners. If the beauty of virtue is laid in one ſcale, and intereſt in the other, it will not be difficult to determine to which ſide the balance will incline.

The accuſations of conſcience will be little regarded, unleſs they are conſidered as an earneſt of the worm that never dies. Take away the doctrine of a world to come, and you make this world a ſcene of univerſal depravity and open wickedneſs.

At firſt view we would be apt to wonder at the ways of Heaven, and perhaps tempted in our minds to arraign the conduct of Providence, in crowning this worthleſs and wicked man with wealth and proſperity, whilſt all that diverſified the good man's lot was ſcene after ſcene of poverty and pain. But let us ſuſpend our judgment. We ſee but one link in the great chain of Providence. We live but in the infancy of being. The great drama of life is but begun. When the cataſtrophe is brought about, when the curtain between both worlds is undrawn, the morn will ariſe that will light the Almighty's footſteps in the deep, and pour full day upon all the paths of his providence.

VERSE 22. *And it came to paſs that the beggar died.* He died, and all his miſeries died with him. He whom this rich man would have diſdained to have conſidered as his fellow-creature, had a company of

angels ſent down to tranſport him to the regions of the bleſſed, to the boſom of Abraham, where all his ſorrows had an end, and the tears were for ever wiped from his eyes. Let the needy and the oppreſſed take conſolation from this ſalutary doctrine. With God there is no reſpect of perſons. Let it be the great buſineſs of your lives to be rich in faith and in good works, and to lay up treaſures in heaven, and then you may rejoice in hope, that though you have nothing here, yet yours is the kingdom of God.

Verses 23. to 26. incluſive. Before our Saviour's incarnation, the Greek language had made its way into Judea. Along with the language of the Greeks, their opinions in philoſophy, and the fictions of their poetry, had been introduced, and made part of the popular belief. This part of the parable which we have now read, is evidently founded upon the fictions of the Grecian poets concerning the ſtate of departed ſouls. They, as well as our Lord in this parable, repreſent the abodes of the bleſſed as lying contiguous to the regions of the damned, and ſeparated only by a great impaſſable river, or deep gulf, in ſuch a manner, that the ghoſts could talk with one another from its oppoſite banks. In the parable, ſouls, whoſe bodies were buried, know each other, and converſe together, as if they had been embodied. In like manner, the heathens introduce departed ſouls as talking together, and repreſent them as having pains and pleaſures analogous to what we feel in this life; and they thought that the ſhades of the dead had an exact reſemblance to their bodies. The parable ſays, that the ſouls of wicked men are tormented in flames; the Grecian poets tell us, that they

lie in a river of fire, where they ſuffer the ſame torments they would have ſuffered while alive, had their bodies been burnt. From this account, therefore, we are to draw no inferences concerning the real nature of heaven or of hell. A parable is no more than an inſtructive fable or tale, and the only thing to be regarded in it is the moral that it conveys. We cannot therefore conclude from this parable, that there is material fire in hell, or that the abodes of the bleſſed and the regions of the damned are contiguous to one another. The word of God gives us no materials wherein we can make a deſcription either of hell or heaven. It was never the intention of ſcripture to ſatisfy our curioſity, but to influence our practice, and for that purpoſe to awake our hopes and our fears, by repreſenting the one as being the region of the greateſt torment, and the other as the ſcene of unmingled and everlaſting joy.

The rich man died, and was buried. We read not of the burial of the poor man. He would be thrown into a common grave, and mingled with vulgar and obſcure duſt. But the rich man was buried with pomp and with ſplendour. Crowds of mercenary mourners would attend his funeral, and venal tears be ſhed upon his tomb. Every amiable and every reſpectable quality would be aſcribed to him by thoſe ready flatterers, who have always a character at hand for the deceaſed of quality. But, inſenſible to this incenſe, *in hell he lift up his eyes.* How aſtoniſhing and how awful muſt it be, my brethren, for a perſon who believes not in a future ſtate, to receive his firſt conviction from the flames of the lake which burneth for ever, and from the gnawings of the worm that

never dies. The requeſt of the rich man is very remarkable. He does not acknowledge the juſtneſs of his puniſhment, nor confeſs the greatneſs of his ſins. He does not ſhow any remorſe of mind for the offences he had committed againſt God, for the injuries he had done to ſociety, or for the ruin he had brought upon his own ſoul. He had no ſorrow for ſin, he had only a feeling of pain. He did not want to be delivered from his guilt, but only from puniſhment. But ſuch had been his character in this world. The fact is, my brethren, we retain the ſame diſpoſitions hereafter, that we cultivate here. It is utterly impoſſible, that the mere ſeparation of the ſoul from matter, can make any alteration upon the eſſential qualities of the ſoul. We carry to the other world the ſame qualities, the ſame temper of mind, and the ſame character, that we have on earth. What manner of perſons doth it become us then to be. As we now ſow, hereafter we reap. Our heaven or our hell is already begun within us. The worm that never dies hath already begun to gnaw the heart of the wicked; and the good man hath already begun thoſe hymns and hoſannas of praiſe which ſhall employ him through eternity.

Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receiveds thy good things. This anſwer of the Patriarch is remarkable for mildneſs. When a perſon by his imprudence and folly hath involved himſelf in a ſcene of diſtreſs, there is nothing more common than for thoſe who viſit him at ſuch a time, to upbraid him with his bypaſt conduct in the ſevereſt manner, and to adminiſter rebukes with acrimony and bitterneſs. Inſtead of giving their aſſiſtance to extricate him from his diſtreſſes, thoſe

miſerable comforters puſh them deeper into the pit, and take a cruel pleaſure in adding affliction to the afflicted, conſcious that whilſt they are inſulting over their unfortunate brother, they are paying encomiums to their own ſuperior prudence and diſcretion. This rich man had brought himſelf into the laſt of evils, into an evil that admitted of no remedy, by his own wickedneſs. Yet Abraham did not addreſs him in this ſevere and inſulting language. He calls him *ſon*, his deſcendant according to the fleſh. The good Patriarch wanted not to add to the horrors of hell. The ſpirit of rage and rancour never gains admittance into the boſoms of the bleſſed. This ſhows us how different the meek, the gentle, and the benevolent temper is from that cruel and mercileſs zeal which often paſſeth for it upon earth.

His own petition being refuſed, the rich man now applies for his relations. VERSE 27. *Then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldſt ſend him to my father's houſe.* Let no wicked man boaſt himſelf of poſſeſſing ſome virtues amid the number of his crimes. You ſee there is even ſome goodneſs in hell. The rich man retained ſtill ſome affection for his brethren, and had a deſire for their converſion. Though they had been partakers with him in his ſins, he did not want them to be partakers of his puniſhment. The repetition of the requeſt ſhows he was in earneſt.

VERSE 31. *Neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.* As this is a point of great conſequence, it requires to be illuſtrated at ſome length. Let us ſuppoſe, that in order to convince a perſon of the immortality of his ſoul, Almighty God ſent

one of his deceaſed friends, either in his unembodied ſtate, or with the ſame body he had in life. As no perſon would require ſuch a proof, but one who was very much addicted to ſcepticiſm, it is very probable, that even then his doubts would not be removed. He might ſay, this may be an impoſtor, perhaps this may be ſome evil ſpirit who has aſſumed the ſhape of my deceaſed friend.

But let us ſuppoſe, that theſe doubts are removed, that he is convinced of the reality of the apparition, and the truth of a future ſtate. Let us then ſee what effect it would have upon his life. He goes into company. He tells the ſtory of the apparition to his companions. They hear it with deriſion and ridicule, and conſider him as a viſionary enthuſiaſt, diſturbed in his imagination. As the experience of all mankind is againſt him, and the laws appear to be fixed for ever, of no intercourſe between this world and the next, in whatever companies he tells it, it meets with the ſame treatment, and all the effect of the apparition is, that it makes every one to conclude him to be beſide himſelf. You all know how difficult it is to remain ſingle in opinion againſt the whole world. It is ſtill harder to become the object of laughter and ridicule; ſo that with theſe difficulties in his way, it is ten to one but he falls in with the opinion of the world, and believes the apparition to have been the phantom of his own fancy. That this is not a mere conjecture, but what would really happen, appears from undoubted matter of fact, that did really happen. You remember the hiſtory of Saul. When the Lord would not anſwer him by his prophets, he went in queſt of a woman who had a familiar ſpirit.

She raiſed up to him an apparition, which he believed to be the ghoſt of Samuel the prophet. The apparition aſſured him that his kingdom was departing from him, and that he had only one day longer to live. What effect had this upon the king? Did he repent of his ſins? At firſt he was ſore afraid, and was melancholy; but through the perſuaſion of his attendants, he ſoon reſumed his joy; and, on the morrow after the battle was loſt, in order to fulfil the prophecy of the devil, he proceeded to commit the moſt deliberate crime that can be perpetrated by man: he raiſed impious hands againſt his life, and plunged his ſword in his own breaſt.

The fact is, my brethren, mankind are not always in a mood to be convinced. In ſpite of ſpeculative opinion, men act from their paſſions, and bad paſſions will always produce bad actions, to the end of the world. The reluctance of mankind to aſſent to evidence, when it makes againſt their preconceived opinion, is remarkably apparent in the reception the Jews gave to our Saviour. All the prophecies concerning the Meſſiah were fulfilled in him. He appeared in the world in the preciſe time predicted for the coming of the Meſſiah; he was deſcended of the lineage of David; he was born in the city of Bethlehem. A prophet went before him in the ſpirit and power of Elias. He performed miracles and mighty works, which no man could perform. But after all theſe proofs, after all theſe miracles, the Jews, who expected their Meſſiah to be a temporal Prince, ſtill demanded more evidence. "Show us," ſaid they, "a ſign from heaven." A ſign from heaven they obtained. Now, in the preſence of multitudes,

a voice came from heaven, the voice of the Eternal, piercing the clouds, and proclaiming aloud, "This "is my beloved Son!" Were they then convinced? No: they perſecuted him with reproaches in his life, and at laſt brought him to an ignominious death. And when they had nailed him to the accurſed tree, they ſtill affirmed they would believe on him on proper evidence. "Let him come down from the croſs, "and we will believe on him." If he had come down from the croſs, the redemption of mankind would have been defeated, as it was to be accompliſhed by his death; but he did more than come down from the croſs. He roſe from the dead. Did they then believe on him? No: they charged the ſoldiers who brought them the news of his reſurrection, to give out that his diſciples ſtole him away while they ſlept. Well then may we adopt the maxim of the Patriarch Abraham, and affirm, That if ye believe not Moſes and the Prophets; if ye believe not Chriſt and his Apoſtles; ye will not be perſuaded *though one roſe from the dead.*

LECTURE IV.

MATTHEW XXV. 1—10.

1 *Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

2 *And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh.*

3 *They that were fooliſh took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*

4 *But the wiſe took oil in their veſſels with their lamps.*

5 *While the bridegroom tarried, they all ſlumbered and ſlept.*

6 *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

7 *Then all thoſe virgins aroſe, and trimmed their lamps.*

8 *And the fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

9 *But the wiſe anſwered, ſaying, Not ſo; leſt there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that ſell, and buy for yourſelves.*

10 *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage; and the door was ſhut.*

IN a former lecture, I explained to you the nature, the origin, and the uſe of parables. They were the common vehicles of inſtruction among the oriental nations. The wiſdom of the eaſt loved to go adorned with flowers and with figures, and by means of the imagination to make its way to the heart. This mode of inſtruction was frequently honored by our Lord's adopting it. Accommodating himſelf to the practice of the eaſt, and to the manners of the Jews, he wrapt up his wiſdom in this veil, and delivered his doctrines to the people in parables. As men are much under the guidance of the external ſenſes, and ſtrongly impreſſed by the material objects around them, he who knew what was in man, and who

laid hold of every avenue to the human heart, frequently addreſſed himſelf to this part of our frame. He ſpiritualizes the whole ſyſtem of nature, he turns the moſt common and familiar occurrences of life into vehicles of Divine truth, and in the gentleſt and moſt inſinuating manner, leads us from earth to heaven.

In the parable which I have now read, the kingdom of Heaven, or diſpenſation of the Goſpel, is likened to a marriage ſolemnity. On ſuch occaſions it was a cuſtom among the Jews, that the bridegroom, in company with his friends, came late in the night to the houſe of the bride, where, upon a ſignal given, ſhe and her bridemaids went out in proceſſion to light him into the houſe, with great ceremony and ſplendour. It is ſaid that *five of theſe virgins were wiſe, and that five of them were fooliſh.* I explained to you, on a former occaſion, that, in a parable, we are not to apply particular expreſſions, but to conſider the intention and deſign upon the whole. If we underſtood and applied this expreſſion literally, we ſhould be led to conclude that, under the New Teſtament, the number of the good and of the bad was equal. But to ſettle this point, to aſcertain the number of thoſe who are to be ſaved, and of thoſe who are to be damned, was not the intention of our Lord in the parable. For, by the ſame way of arguing, we might infer from the parable of the talents, which immediately follows this, that the number of the good was double the number of the wicked, as there were two faithful ſervants who improved the talents committed to them, for one ſlothful ſervant who wrapt up his in a napkin; and in the parable of the marriage ſupper, in the foregoing chapter,

amongſt all the number of the gueſts who were called to the feaſt, there was only one who wanted the wedding garment: only from this general ſcheme of thought which runs through all our Lord's parables, from their being always framed with a view to the charitable ſide, we may ſafely draw two concluſions. In the *firſt* place, Let us always form a favourable judgment concerning the character and ſtate of thoſe who are externally decent, whether they agree or differ from us in opinion; and, if we do err, let us err on the ſide of charity. There are a ſet of men to be found in the world, who are remarkably fond of paſſing ſentence and judgment upon the external ſtate of their neighbours, and in paſſing this judgment, they attend not ſo much to the general tenor of life, and integrity of conduct, as to the ſyſtem of doctrines which a man believes, and the ſect or party in which he arranges himſelf. Unleſs you believe in every point preciſely as they do, down you go in their eſtimation.

Raſh and profane mortal, who gave thee a commiſſion to fix the mark of election and reprobation upon men? Did Almighty God depute thee to draw the line betwixt the kingdom of darkneſs and the kingdom of light, to fill the heavens, and to people hell? We are aſtoniſhed, and ſtand aghaſt at the boldneſs and impiety of the Roman Pontiff, who pretends to open and to ſhut the gate of mercy, and who arrogates to himſelf the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And yet thou who accuſeſt him, art thyſelf equally guilty. Thou ruſheſt unto the throne of the Eternal, and dareſt to direct the thunders of the Divine vengeance. Thou preſcribeſt bounds to the

mercy of the Omnipotent, and ſayeſt to his ſaving grace, "Hitherto ſhalt thou come, and no farther." Vile worm! doſt thou not tremble at thine own impiety? Fall proſtrate in the duſt. Shrink into thine own inſignificance. Let thy time be employed in working out thine own ſalvation, rather than in dealing of damnation to thy neighbours.

At the ſame time, though I condemn this rage which ſome men diſcover to condemn their neighbours, as, in my opinion, entirely inconſiſtent with the genius of the Goſpel, and the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, nevertheleſs I would not go into their extreme, and paſs the ſame ſentence on them which they paſs upon others. To paſs a judgment upon characters is a difficult taſk, and requires a very delicate hand. We ought to diſtinguiſh what flows from a narrowneſs of mind, from what flows from a badneſs of heart. We ought to make great allowances for the prejudices of education. If a man be educated in the belief, that none are to be ſaved but thoſe who believe every article of that ſyſtem which he embraces; if his judgment concerning the characters of men reſt not upon the goodneſs of their lives, but upon the ſoundneſs of their belief, ſuch a man's charity muſt be narrow and conſtrained. And this may ſometimes be owing, not to the badneſs of his nature, but to the badneſs of his religious principles. And I have ſometimes ſeen ſuch perſons, though I muſt acknowledge very rarely, ſtriving and ſtruggling to get the better of their ſyſtem; the heart and the affections true to Chriſtianity, whilſt the mind was enſlaved by the prejudices of education.

Verse 3. *They that were fooliſh took their lamps, and*

took no oil with them. The foolish virgins seemed at first to resemble the wise, and shone out for a while with the same lustre. They made the same profession and appearance at first. Themselves were awake, and their lamps were burning. But they had no supply for the future. Their goodness was like the morning cloud, and soon vanished away. They had no real religion in the heart. They wanted that inward principle of grace, which can alone enable us to stand fast in the Lord. They were not rooted and grounded in the faith. They had no steady principles of conduct, nor settled habits of action. Like the seed which was sown in the stony ground, they forthwith sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun arose they withered away.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They sought and obtained the influences of the Divine Spirit to abide with them through life. They made a serious business of religion. They laid up a store of useful knowledge. They acted upon fixed and steady principles, and acquired habits of religion and virtue. They kept the heart well, knowing that out of it are the issues of life. They looked forwards to the time to come; they provided against the evil day, and extended their view to take in all the temptations and afflictions of human life.

Verse 5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Whether we interpret this coming of the bridegroom, to be the second coming of our Lord to judge the world, or whether we apply it to our appearance before his tribunal at death, is a subject of no consequence; the material point to be considered is, that while the bridegroom tarried, all

of them, the wiſe as well as the fooliſh virgins, ſlumbered and ſlept. The wiſe grew remiſs and careleſs, and the ſpiritual life declined within them. The fooliſh virgins returned again to fooliſhneſs, and becauſe the Lord delayed, becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work was not ſpeedily executed, were fully bent to do evil. Seeing then that the wiſe virgins ſlumbered as well as the fooliſh; ſeeing that good men, as well as bad men, may fall into ſin; a queſtion, a very ſerious one, naturally ariſes: how ſhall we diſtinguiſh between thoſe temporary relaxations in the Chriſtian race, into which a good man may fall, from the final apoſtaſy of the wicked; how ſhall we diſtinguiſh between the ſins of infirmity, into which the beſt men may fall, from thoſe ſins which are unto death? And to this I beg your attention, as one of the moſt important ſubjects which can ever occupy your thoughts. In order to decide this queſtion, Let me aſk you, in the *firſt* place, What was the nature of your relapſe into ſin? There are times in which all men feel religious impreſſions and devout diſpoſitions of mind. The ſeed is ſown in ſtony places, as well as on the good ground. The influences of heaven deſcend on the barren deſert, as well as on the field which is to be fruitful. On ſuch occaſions, the ſeed which was ſown on the ſtony places will ſpring up for a time, and the barren deſert will ſeem to bloom. To ſpeak without a figure, the Spirit of God in one manner or another, in his common or in his ſpecial influences, deſcends upon all men. After ſuch times of refreſhing, the ſaint of a day, as well as the perſevering Chriſtian, will receive the word with gladneſs, and ſet about a thorough refor-

mation. And as both of them receive the word with gladneſs, ſo both of them are ſubject to ſin. Yet they are not alike in their errors. The ſinner having no real principle at bottom, having no fixed plan of life, and but doing every thing by fits and ſtarts, may, at the firſt approach of temptation, advance with ſwift ſteps to ruin. But the true Chriſtian, laying his account to meet with hardſhips and temptations, prepares againſt them, and will not wholly fall off. The coward may at once deſert his poſt, and fly from the banners of the Captain of ſalvation, to the ſtandard of the prince of darkneſs: but the good ſoldier of Jeſus will make head againſt the enemy; he will encounter his ſpiritual foe; he may be foiled for a moment, but he will never be ſubdued.

In the *ſecond* place, Let me aſk you, what is the ſtate of your mind during theſe relapſes? Are you in total ſubjection to the ſins which have dominion over you? Is your conſcience lulled in a profound ſleep? Do you roll iniquity like a ſweet morſel under your tongue? Do you find the ways of ſin to be ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths to be peace? Is your bondage ſweet, and are the chains of your captivity become pleaſant to you? Then I pronounce that there are no ſymptoms of ſpiritual life within you; then your ſleep is unto death. But, on the other hand, is the dominion which ſin has over you, againſt the bent of your ſoul? Whilſt you ſleep, does your heart wake? During your captivity, is your face towards Jeruſalem? Do you lament the deceitfulneſs of your heart, the feebleneſs of your reſolutions, and your own impotence to ſave yourſelf? Do you ſtrive to burſt aſunder the bands which detain you? Then there is hope in Iſrael concerning you.

In the *third* place, Let me aſk you, what is the nature of the ſins into which you fall ? Are they contrived beforehand, deliberate ? Do you commit them with coolneſs and with conſideration ? Or are you led aſtray on a ſudden by the ſtrength of temptation, and power of prevailing paſſion ? The beſt of men are ſubject to the impulſe of paſſion; may yield to the ſtrength of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault. But he is a wicked man who ſins upon a plan; who makes a ſyſtem of iniquity; who contrives ſcenes of miſchief upon his bed, and who riſes to execute with ardour what he has contrived with coolneſs. If the ſun goes down upon thy wrath, or any other bad paſſion; if day unto day uttereth ſpeech of your evil deeds; if night after night findeth you in the ſervice of ſin, then you are a ſinner indeed, then you are in the gall of bitterneſs and in the bond of iniquity.

Let me aſk again, What are the ſins that moſt eaſily beſet you ? The ſins of men may be divided into two claſſes. The one kind flows from a good principle wrong directed, from the perverſion and abuſe of laudable inclinations; the other kind flows from evil principles and a bad heart. Of the latter kind, are malice, envy, treachery, cruelty, malignity, deceit, and hypocriſy. Theſe indicate a mind which neither fears God nor regards man. The beſt Chriſtians will at times fall into ſins; but they will never harbour in their heart the dark offspring of hell. They may have the failings and the faults of men; but they will never have the crimes of devils, nor the ſpirit of the damned.

Verse 6. *At midnight there was a cry heard.* At midnight, the hour of ſilence and repoſe, when the

operations of nature ſeemed to ſtand ſtill, and all things were at reſt, when there was no expectation of any event, then was the cry heard, then was the alarm given—*Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!* And indeed, my brethren, it often happens, that our laſt hour comes unexpected. When we are buſied in ſome favourite ſcheme, when we are laying a ſcene of happineſs which we expect will laſt for years, the awful voice comes, "This night thy "ſoul ſhall be required of thee." I mention not this as if I thought it one of the evils of life. If we are prepared to die, a ſudden death muſt be the moſt agreeable of all. The ſervant who is doing his duty, will be agreeably ſurpriſed at an unexpected viſit from his maſter. The ſoldier whoſe arms are crowned with conqueſt, would be happy if his prince ſhould ſuddenly come to be the witneſs of his victory.

VERSE 7. *Then all thoſe virgins aroſe, and trimmed their lamps.* Their lamps were not gone out, though they were not burning bright. They ſoon aroſe and trimmed them, to meet the bridegroom. A good man is always habitually prepared for death. He has an intereſt in the righteouſneſs of his Redeemer, which purchaſed life and immortality to men; and he is poſſeſſed of thoſe good and holy diſpoſitions which fit us for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. Such a perſon is ever in a ſtate of preparation to meet with his Lord.

VERSE 8. *And the fooliſh virgins ſaid unto the wiſe, Give us of your oil.* Mark here, my brethren, the triumph of religion. Wicked men at the laſt envy the ſtate and the happineſs of the good, and deſire to partake in it. There is a time coming when thoſe

who ſcoff at religion, and laugh at every thing that is ſerious, will gladly ſay to thoſe humble and contrite ones whom they now deſpiſe, "Give us of your oil." "Let us die the death of the righteous; let our laſt "end be like his." "Would to God our ſouls "were in your ſouls place." Feeble and ineffectual wiſhes! which diſcover their miſery, but which cannot ſave them from it.

VERSE 9. *Leſt there be not enough for us and you.* There are no works of ſupererogation. After we have done all, we are unprofitable ſervants; and though we were perfect, we can aſſign no part of our righteouſneſs to you: "*go to thoſe that ſell.*" Go to the ordinances of Divine appointment; improve thoſe means of grace which you formerly deſpiſed; break off your ſins by repentance; who knows if it be yet too late?—*Cætera deſunt.*

LECTURE V.

LUKE ix. 28—36.

28 *And it came to paſs, about an eight days after theſe ſayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*

29 *And as he prayed, the faſhion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and gliſtering.*

30 *And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moſes and Elias;*

31 *Who appeared in glory, and ſpoke of his deceaſe which he ſhould accompliſh at Jeruſalem.*

32 *But Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with ſleep: and when they were awake, they ſaw his glory, and the two men that ſtood with him.*

33 *And it came to paſs, as they departed from him, Peter ſaid unto Jeſus, Maſter, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moſes, and one for Elias: not knowing what he ſaid.*

34 *While he thus ſpake, there came a cloud, and overſhadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.*

35 *And there came a voice out of the cloud, ſaying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.*

36 *And when the voice was paſt, Jeſus was found alone: and they kept it cloſe, and told no man in thoſe days any of thoſe things which they had ſeen.*

IN theſe verſes, we have an account of a very remarkable event. Our Saviour having foretold his ſufferings and death, in order to keep alive the faith and hopes of his diſciples, who would be apt to deſpair under that mournful event, alſo foretold them, that ſome of their own number, before their departure, ſhould behold him coming in his kingdom. "But I tell you of a truth, there be ſome ſtanding "here, which ſhall not taſte of death till they ſee the "kingdom of God."

As an accompliſhment of this prediction, he takes his three favourite diſciples, Peter, James, and John, and having carried them to an high mountain, was transfigured before their eyes, that he might give them ſome idea of the glory of that kingdom to which he was afterwards to aſcend. The mountain here mentioned, by tradition, is Tabor, a hill of great beauty, and, according to Joſephus, very high.

Many magnificent events in the Divine diſpenſations, have been tranſacted on hills. It was on mount Sinai that God deſcended to give the law: it was on the hill of Moriah that he commanded Iſaac to be ſacrificed: it was on the hill of Zion that he ordered the temple to be built: from the mount of Olives, Chriſt was wont to ſend up his prayers to Heaven; and on the mount Tabor he was transfigured, and appeared in glory to his diſciples. This is founded upon nature. There is an air of grandeur in a lofty mountain, that loſes itſelf in the heavens, and caſteth its ſhadow into diſtant lands, which accords with the natural greatneſs of the ſoul, and awakens a feeling that is highly favourable to devotion. The grandeur, the awfulneſs, the ſilence, and the ſolitude of the ſcene, aſſiſt ſentiments of religious adoration. Remote from man, and exalted above the turbulence of the inferior world, we breathe celeſtial air, we feel divinity more preſent, and bow down and worſhip in the temple not made with hands. Hence men, actuated by their natural feelings, and under the impreſſions of religious awe, have ſo often been guided to erect their temples upon hills, and to conſecrate to the Deity ſuch places as thoſe, on which he had appeared, and where his footſteps were ſeen.

We are told, that our Saviour went up to this mountain to pray. Chriſt began all his great works with prayer to Heaven. Before he entered on his public miniſtry, he retired into the wilderneſs, and devoted forty days to contemplation and prayer. When he was about to ſuffer his laſt agony, he went and prayed in the garden. And here, when he enters upon his transfiguration, he went up to a mountain to pray. Illuſtrious example of piety and devotion! worthy the ſtudy and imitation of the world. If the eternal Son of God, the Mediator between God and man, who had no errors to be corrected, who had no ſins to be forgiven, and who had few wants to be relieved, if he entered upon no important work without prayer to Heaven, if he ſpent whole nights in the fervour of devotion, ſhall men, ſhall feeble, indigent, and ſinful men, dare to attempt works of importance, or ruſh into ſcenes of danger, without lifting up their eyes and hearts to Heaven, and imploring the protection and aſſiſtance of Providence? And yet it is to be dreaded that there are many perſons who go under the name of Chriſtians, who live in the conſtant and habitual neglect of this duty; who go out and come in, who riſe up and lie down, without once bending the knee to the God of Heaven, and who, unleſs on this returning day, when they join in the public devotions of the Church, never acknowledge their dependence upon God. Far be ſuch conduct from you, my brethren.

Peter, James, and John, were alſo choſen as the witneſſes of our Saviour's agony. If they rejoiced with him on mount Tabor, they alſo ſuffered with him in the garden of Gethſemane. And indeed it

ſeems to be one of the general laws by which this world is governed, that thoſe who have the higheſt enjoyments ſhould alſo have the deepeſt afflictions. Providence has wiſely balanced human affairs, and ſet the day of proſperity againſt the day of adverſity. The moſt enchanting hopes give riſe to the moſt mortifying diſappointments; the moſt tranſporting enjoyments end in the crueleſt laſſitude and diſguſt; and the higheſt honor is ſucceeded by the loweſt diſgrace. The ſame lively paſſions and fine feelings that give the greateſt reliſh to proſperity, give alſo the ſevereſt ſmart to the wounds of adverſity.

The transfiguration itſelf is next related. The evangeliſts ſeem to vie with one another in deſcribing the glories of this ſcene. During this period, we are told, *the faſhion of his countenance was altered; his face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as the ſnow.* When Moſes received the law upon mount Sinai, his countenance ſhone in ſuch a manner that the Iſraelites could not behold him. But a greater than Moſes was here; and he was inveſted with greater majeſty. The ſplendour of his Divinity ſhone through the veil with which it was clouded; he reaſſumed ſome rays of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was; and he ſtood confeſſed the Son of the living God.

To heighten the grandeur and the ſolemnity of the ſcene, Moſes, the giver of the law, and Elias, the greateſt among the Prophets, deſcended from heaven, and conferred with him concerning his kingdom. It is uſual for the chief miniſters of a kingdom to reſign the ſeals and badges of their authority to their ſucceſſors in office. Thus, Moſes and Elias, who had

been the miniſters of the kingdom of God under the Old Teſtament, the one repreſenting the law, the other repreſenting the prophets, reſigned their authority to Jeſus Chriſt, who was to reign for ever and ever. Had we, my brethren, been preſent on the mount of transfiguration, been ſpectators of this wonderful ſcene; had we beheld the glorified ſpirits of Moſes and Elias, arrayed in the robes of heaven, and adorned with the beauties of immortality; had we beheld the Son of the Moſt High clothed with uncreated light, and appearing in the glories of Divinity unveiled; had we heard the voice of the Almighty proclaiming from the overſhadowing cloud, *This is my beloved Son, hear him;* would we not have been thrown into that delightful amazement of ſoul, that trance and ecſtaſy of ſpiritual joy, which the diſciples were in when they cried out, not knowing what they ſaid, *Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moſes, and one for Elias!*

The evangeliſt tells us, that the diſciples were heavy with ſleep, or rather heavy as with ſleep; and Mark ſays that they were ſore afraid. From comparing them together, it appears to have been a rapture and an aſtoniſhment that ſuſpended all the powers of the ſoul, with a ſtillneſs ſimilar to ſleep. The ſublime appearances which they ſaw ſtruck a ſudden terror into their minds, and occaſioned that ecſtaſy of ſoul which holy men were generally in when they were favoured with the viſions of God. Moſes and Elias were properly choſen as meſſengers to our Saviour, and witneſſes of his transfiguration, as both of them were eminent types of Chriſt, acceptable to God for their faith and holineſs, and admired by the

Jews their countrymen, for the miracles which they had performed. Both of them were admitted to conference with God in Horeb; both of them had faſted forty days; both of them had divided the waters; they had been both the meſſengers of God to Kings; and as they were marvellous in their lives, ſo there was ſomething extraordinary and miraculous in both their departures. Moſes died at the commandment of the Lord, and was buried in a place which no man knew. Elias, without ſeeing death, was tranſlated to heaven in a chariot of fire.

When this celeſtial triumvirate had aſſembled, what was the topic of their converſation? Did their diſcourſe run upon the fate of empires and the fall of kings? Did they converſe about the progreſs of the human genius, about the improvements of ſociety, the inventions of art, and the diſcoveries of ſcience? Did they talk of the glories of that heaven from which they had deſcended, or attempt a deſcription of thoſe manſions above, whoſe beauty eye hath not ſeen, and whoſe joys ear hath not heard? No, my brethren, an event greater than all theſe engaged their attention. *They talked of that deceaſe or departure which our divine Redeemer was to accompliſh at Jeruſalem.* The proſpect of ſuffering an ignominious and an accurſed death, had always appeared to our Saviour a circumſtance of diſtreſs, and filled him with diſmal forebodings of mind. As the event drew nearer, theſe forebodings increaſed. The proſpect of being forſaken, denied, and betrayed by his friends; of being mocked and tortured and crucified by his enemies; the terrors of the hour and power of darkneſs; the agony in the garden; the horrors of the croſs; the

assault of devils and wicked spirits; and, far above all, the hiding of his Father's countenance, and drinking the cup of the wrath of God; these were circumstances of tremendous suffering, sufficient to have overwhelmed his human nature with horror and despair.

But as an angel was sent to comfort him in the garden, so here two illustrious saints descended from heaven to allay the terrors of that decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. They might represent his passion to him as entering into the councils of heaven before the world began; as the hope and expectation of all the patriarchs and prophets and righteous men under the law; as the accomplishment of all the prophecies delivered to the Old Testament Church; as the fulfilment of all the types and prefigurations of the Mosaic institution; as the consummation of the legal economy, and period of the Jewish Church; and as the commencement of a new age and higher order of events. They might place it before his eyes as confirming his doctrine from above; as magnifying the law and making it honorable; as rendering glory to God in the highest, and restoring peace on earth, and good-will towards men; as conquering the principalities and powers of darkness, and setting open the gates of paradise for all the faithful to enter in. They might set it before his eyes as the means of overthrowing the kingdom of Satan; as diffusing light and life and salvation through the world; as uniting the nations in the bonds of charity and love; as being the great theme to the Church universal under the New Testament; as affording a subject for new hymns and anthems to the heavenly host; as reaching beyond

the circle of time, and drawing hoſannas of praiſe from the heirs of immortality, through the round of everlaſting ages. Theſe conſiderations would comfort our Redeemer under the forebodings of his paſſion; and the proſpect of the joy that was ſet before him would animate and ſtrengthen him to endure the croſs, to deſpiſe the ſhame, and to finiſh the work which the Father gave him to do.

Seeing then that the death and paſſion of our Saviour is an event of ſuch infinite importance, let us, my brethren, make it the theme of our praiſe, and the ſubject of our contemplation. Let us frequently call to mind that ſcene which mount Calvary beheld, the ſufferings that our Saviour there endured, the groans that he uttered, and the blood that he ſhed on our behalf. Let us dwell on that marvellous love which moved him to undergo ſuch unutterable agonies, till we feel its transforming power and efficacy, and are changed into the ſame image from glory to glory; that ſo the croſs of Chriſt, which was to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs, may become to us the wiſdom and the power of God.

Verse 36. *And they kept it cloſe, and told no man.* Though they were ſo highly favoured of their Lord, allowed to behold him in the glories of his future kingdom, and to hold converſe with two illuſtrious meſſengers from the manſions above, nevertheleſs they made no merit of the preference that was ſhown them, and even concealed from the world that they were diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the apoſtles. Such, my brethren, is the uniform conduct of good Chriſtians. The manifeſtations of heaven only in-

ſpire them with humility. He is but a novice in the ſchool of Chriſtianity, who is puffed up by any privileges which he has attained. Greater degrees of grace, and higher attainments in virtue, baniſh all ſelf-conceit and ſpiritual pride. This holds in other matters as well as in religion. The pretender always outdoes the real character. The actor always exceeds nature, and goes beyond the life. In friendſhip, thoſe who have leaſt of the reality, have generally moſt of the appearance and pretence. Men of the greateſt talents and abilities appear in converſation but like other men; whilſt fools and coxcombs aſſume thoſe airs of ſuperiority, and that tone of ſolemn pedantry, which amazes the ignorant. This holds even in infidelity itſelf. Thoſe wretches, who ſet their mouths againſt the heavens, and profeſs open impiety, are generally hypocrites in wickedneſs, who believe and tremble when alone, and are in the horrors whenever they are left in the dark.

Beware therefore of a form of religion without the power thereof. The voice of true piety is not heard in the ſtreets. She ſounds no trumpet before her, affects no appearances, and lays claim to no diſtinctions. Thoſe perſons are always to be ſuſpected who covet the public eye; who make a ſhow of their ſanctity, and who endeavour to dazzle the world with the pomp and the parade of godlineſs. Let men diſcover your piety and virtue; do not you diſcover them yourſelves. There is all the difference in the world betwixt being exemplary and being oſtentatious. When the angels deſcended of old, they were in form and appearance like men; but when the devil appeared, he transformed himſelf into an angel of light.

CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

OF THE

LORD's SUPPER.

[The Engliſh edition contains the prayers, hymns, and other ceremonies practiced in the preſbyterian churches of Scotland; but as theſe are of a local nature, and as their inſertion would ſwell the volume beyond the propoſed ſize, it was thought expedient to omit all but the ſermons.]

MORNING OR ACTION-SERMON.

LUKE xxii. 44.

And being in an agony.—

THE agony of our Lord in the garden, and his complaints upon the croſs, are the moſt extraordinary parts of his life. A dread of thoſe ſufferings which he was to undergo, appears to have made a ſtrong impreſſion upon his mind. Forebodings of them frequently diſturbed his repoſe, and overwhelmed his ſpirits. Many days before his paſſion, he cried out, "Now am I troubled, and what "ſhall I ſay? Father ſave me from this hour." It was probably with a view to conſole his mind in ſuch a dejected ſtate, that he was transfigured; that he re-aſſumed the glory which he had with the Father

before the foundation of the world, and was favoured with the preſence of Moſes and Elias from the manſions of immortality; for, as we are informed by the Evangeliſt, they talked of that deceaſe which he was to accompliſh at Jeruſalem. Magnanimity in all its exertions was a conſpicuous part of his character. He who walked upon the water, who ſlept in tranquillity amid the ſtorm, and who encountered the foe of mankind in the deſert, cannot be accuſed of a defect in courage. When a band of ſoldiers, with Judas at their head, came to apprehend him, and inquired for Jeſus of Nazareth, he ſaid unto them, "I am he," and by the dignity of his demeanour, ſtruck them with awe. When he was accuſed by the chief prieſts and elders before the judgment-ſeat of Pilate, with that majeſtic ſilence which is ſometimes the beſt expreſſion of fortitude, he anſwered not a word. Nay, when he underwent the ſevereſt of his bodily ſufferings upon the croſs, he endured them with a tranquillity, a firmneſs, and magnanimity, which diſplay a mind truly great and undaunted. How, therefore, on ſome other occaſions, his ſpirit was overwhelmed, is a ſubject worthy of our inquiry at all times. More particularly on this day, when we have aſſembled together to renew the memorial of his death upon the croſs, and to recall the remembrance of all his ſufferings.

In further diſcourſing upon this ſubject, I ſhall, in the *firſt* place, ſet before you the account which is given of his ſufferings; and, *ſecondly*, endeavour to aſſign the cauſes of them.

In the *firſt* place, I am to ſet before you the account which is given of his ſufferings.

That night in which he was betrayed, the Saviour of the world went into the garden of Gethſemane and aſcended the mountain of Olives, as he was wont to do. This had been his accuſtomed retreat from the world; here was the hallowed ground to which he retired for prayer and contemplation; here he had often ſpent the night in intercourſe with Heaven. He was accompanied by Peter, James, and John, the very ſame diſciples who had been the witneſſes of his glorious transfiguration, when Moſes and Elias had appeared to him, and a voice had come from the overſhadowing cloud, "This is my beloved Son, in "whom I am well pleaſed." What a different ſcene now preſented itſelf! the rays of glory ſhone no more; the Divine preſence was withdrawn; the voice from heaven ceaſed; that time was now come, which is ſo emphatically called *the hour and power of darkneſs.*

He had lately partaken of the paſſover with his diſciples; that paſſover which, with ſo much earneſtneſs, he had deſired to eat; he had inſtituted the holy ſacrament of the ſupper; he had delivered thoſe divine diſcourſes recorded in the Goſpel of John; he had warned them againſt deſerting him in the hour of temptation; he had ſelected three of them to attend him in his ſorrows: nevertheleſs, even theſe three, thus favoured, thus honored, thus warned, forgat all that had been ſaid and done, and unconcerned ſunk into ſleep. He was left alone to endure the bitterneſs of that hour.

The ſeverity of his ſufferings in the garden, the anguiſh and the horror which then overwhelmed him, appear from the ſtrong colours in which they are

drawn by the ſacred writers. They ſpeak of his ſorrow: "My ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto "death." They ſpeak of his agony, that is, the moſt inexpreſſible torment of mind: "And being in an "agony." They ſpeak of his fears: "He was heard "in that he feared." They ſpeak of his cries and his tears: "He offered up prayers and ſupplications "with ſtrong crying and tears." They ſpeak of the prodigious effects his agony had upon his body: "His "ſweat was as it were great drops of blood." They ſpeak of the deſire he had to withdraw from his ſufferings for a time: "Father, if it be poſſible, let this "cup paſs from me."

They who are acquainted with the ſtyle of the Holy Evangeliſts, know how remarkable they are for ſimplicity of narrative. They make uſe of no oratorial arts to intereſt the paſſions of their readers, they affect no threatenings or embelliſhments of eloquence, but place the plain action before our view, devoid of all ornament whatever. Hiſtorians contemporary to the events which they record, and who beheld the actions which they deſcribe, uſually give free vent to their paſſions in relating the occurrences of their hiſtory, and enter with the zeal of parties upon the various ſubjects which engage their attention. The ſacred writers, on the other hand, lay aſide every thing that looks like paſſion or party zeal; they relate events not like men who were intereſted in the facts which they deſcribe; not like men who had acted a part in the hiſtory they write; not even with the ordinary emotion of ſpectators, but with all the ſimplicity, and conciſeneſs, and brevity, of an evidence in a court of juſtice. The torments which

our Saviour endured in the garden, therefore, muſt have been great and amazing, when the ſacred writers clothe them with all the circumſtances of terror, and paint them in all the colours of diſtreſs. What ſhall we ſay, then, to account for this dejection which our Lord felt, and for this deſire which he expreſſed to be ſaved from his ſufferings? In the ordinary courſe of human affairs, an innocent man of common fortitude, reſigns himſelf with acquieſcence to his fate; his integrity ſupports him; a good cauſe and a good conſcience carry him onwards through life and death, undaunted and undiſmayed. Hence, many illuſtrious and virtuous men in the heathen world, ſupported by the native fortitude of the human mind, poured contempt upon all the forms of death, and departed with magnanimity and with glory. If a man who had only innocence to ſupport him, might thus acquieſce in his doom, one whoſe ſufferings were to be publicly uſeful, whoſe death was to be glorious to himſelf, and beneficial to the world, might rejoice in the midſt of his ſufferings, and exult in the proſpect of death. In the early times of the Chriſtian Church, the firſt diſciples followed their Lord in a path that was marked with blood; perſons of all ranks, of all ages, and of both ſexes, braved the rage of the enemy, the ſword of the perſecutor, the fire of the tormentor, became candidates for the crown of martyrdom, and with triumph embraced that very form of death at which our Lord, to appearance, now trembled and ſtood aghaſt.

This leads us to the *ſecond* thing propoſed, which was to account for theſe appearances; to aſſign the

cauſes of our Lord's peculiar ſufferings. In general, then, there were circumſtances in the paſſion of our Lord, of a ſingular kind, fully adequate to produce the effects here mentioned. What theſe were, will appear when we conſider that our Lord died in a ſtate where he was abandoned by his friends, and by mankind; that he died in a ſtate of ignominy; and that he died in a ſtate, where, after ſuffering an agony of ſpirit, he was at laſt forſaken by his Father in heaven. While the two former of theſe can hardly be paralleled in all their circumſtances, the laſt is entirely peculiar to our Lord, and conſtitutes the chief branch of his ſufferings.

Firſt, He died in a ſtate where he was abandoned by his friends and by mankind. From the beginning he found the world againſt him. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. He was to be made perfect through ſufferings, and many were the diſtreſſes which wrung his heart, before the deceaſe which he accompliſhed at Jeruſalem. This was the ſevereſt of all, from the manifold terrors that were now combined together. He had not only to carry his own croſs, to have his head crowned with thorns, to be derided and buffeted, to be extended upon the accurſed tree, to ſuffer the ſcourge, the nails, and the ſpear. All this he was ſuperior to; but to be abandoned by his friends, and by all mankind, at the very time he was ſuffering for their ſakes, was the peculiar and forlorn fate of the Saviour of the world.

The preſence of our friends, in the hour of trial, gives a ſecret ſtrength to the mind; it affords a melancholy pleaſure to die among thoſe with whom

we lived. But this conſolation our Saviour had not. He had choſen twelve friends to be the partners of his life, and the companions of his death. One of theſe betrayed him, another denied him; all forſook him and fled.

It is ſome relief to the unhappy ſufferer, to have the paſſions of the ſpectators on his ſide; from their ſympathy he derives courage, and the pain that is felt by many is alleviated to the one who ſuffers.

But the high and the low, the Jew and the Heathen, entered into the conſpiracy againſt Chriſt. The prieſts and elders accuſed him. The High Prieſt cried out, "He is guilty of death." Pilate, his judge, though conſcious of his innocence, though he waſhed his hands from the guilt of his death, ordered him to be ſcourged, and allowed him to be crucified. The people, with a frantic ardour, ſought his death. That very people who, a few days before, upon his triumphal entry into Jeruſalem, had ſtrewed the way with palm-branches, and cried out, "Hoſanna "to the Son of David;" that very people, ſuch is the giddineſs of the multitude, now cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." Thus, in his ſorrows, he ſtood by himſelf, a wretched individual without a friend. When the Shepherd was ſmitten, the ſheep were ſcattered abroad. He trode the wine-preſs alone. Of the people there were none with him. When he died for all, he was pitied by none.

In the *ſecond* place, He died in a ſtate of ignominy. The death of the croſs was not only painful and tormenting, but ignominious alſo, and accurſed. A death that was never inflicted upon free men, but reſerved for ſlaves and malefactors, for the baſeſt and

the vileſt of the human kind. There is implanted in the mind of man a ſtrong abhorrence of ſhame and diſgrace. The ſenſe of ignominy is more pungent in a noble nature, than the feeling of pain. To want the appearance of innocence, while, at the ſame time, we preſerve the reality; to lie under the imputation of heinous crimes; to die the death of a criminal, and leave the world with an indelible ſtain upon our name and memory, is one of the ſoreſt trials that virtue can meet with upon earth. Yet even this our Lord had to ſuffer. He had to endure the croſs, and ſubmit to the ſhame. It was foretold by the Prophet, that he ſhould be "numbered among "tranſgreſſors." And although he was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from ſinners, yet he was impeached of the higheſt crimes: not only as a violator of the divine law, in breaking the Sabbath, and frequenting the company of ſinners, but alſo as an impoſtor, deluding the people; as a blaſphemer, aſſuming to himſelf the prerogatives of God; and as a ſeditious perſon, perverting the nation, uſurping royal authority, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæſar. "If he had not been a malefactor," ſaid the Jews to Pilate, "we ſhould not have delivered him up to thee." The reſentment of ſuch a ſituation our Lord felt ſtrongly, and diſcovered in that remarkable ſpeech, "Are ye come againſt me as againſt a thief, with "ſwords and with ſtaves?" Thus, our Lord was not only a ſufferer, but in appearance a criminal: he had not only to endure the pain, but the ignominy of the croſs; not only to be wounded and tormented, but alſo to be mocked, reviled, and ſcorned by the vileſt of mankind. Then were fulfilled the words

of the myſtical Prophet, "I am a reproach of men, "and deſpiſed of the people. All they that ſee me, "laugh me to ſcorn: they ſhoot out the lip, they "ſhake the head, ſaying, he truſted on the Lord, "that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, "ſeeing he delighted in him." There is not a circumſtance in the hiſtory of mankind ſo ignominious, and to an ingenuous nature ſo tormenting, as the following, which is recorded by the Evangeliſts. Pilate ſaid, "Shall I releaſe Jeſus?" "They all cried, "not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was "a robber."

There is a miſapprehenſion into which we are apt to fall, in conſidering the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt. Whenever he appears before our eyes, the ſplendour of his Divinity overcomes the mind, and in the Lord of Glory the man of ſorrows is forgotten. But, my friends, you are to remember that as God is by his nature incapable of pain or ſorrow, in all ſcenes of diſtreſs, the *Divinity* withdrew, that the *Humanity* might ſuffer. Yes, Chriſtians, the man Chriſt Jeſus was like one of ourſelves, as encompaſſed with the ſame infirmities, and ſubjected to the ſame diſtreſſes; as acceſſible to ſorrow, and as ſenſible of ignominy and pain.

Thirdly, Our Lord died in a ſtate, where, after undergoing an agony of ſpirit, he was at laſt forſaken by his Father in heaven. The preſence of God, and the aids of his Holy Spirit, have always been the conſolation of good men in their afflictions. They experienced the fulfilment of theſe promiſes, "As "thy days are, ſo ſhall thy ſtrength be. When thou "goeſt through the waters I will go with thee, and

" through the rivers, they ſhall not overflow thee. " Our fathers truſted in thee," ſaith the Pſalmiſt, " they truſted, and thou didſt deliver them." But in the ſufferings endured by the Redeemer in the garden, and on the croſs, God departed from him, and the Divine preſence was withdrawn.

Chriſtians ! what an hour was that, which our Saviour paſſed in the garden of Gethſemane ! In the time of his paſſion, his torments ſucceeded one another. He was not at the ſame time betrayed, mocked, ſcourged, crowned with thorns, pierced with a ſpear, extended on a croſs, and forſaken by his Father ; but here all theſe torments roſe before him at once : all his pains were united together : what he was to endure in ſucceſſion, now crowded into one moment, and his ſoul was overcome. At this time, too, the powers of darkneſs, it ſhould ſeem, were permitted to work upon his imagination, to diſturb his Spirit, and make the vale through which he was to paſs, appear more dark and gloomy.

Add to this, that our Saviour having now come to the cloſe of his public life, his whole mediatorial undertaking preſented itſelf to his view ; his eye ran over the hiſtory of that race which he came to ſave from the beginning to the end of time ; he had a feeling of all the miſery, and a ſenſe of all the guilt of men. If he looked back into paſt times, what did he behold ? The earth a field of blood, a vale of tears, a theatre of crimes. If he caſt his eyes upon that one in which he lived, what did he behold ? That nation to whom he was ſent, rejecting the counſel of God againſt themſelves, imprecating his blood to be upon them and their children, and bringing

upon themſelves ſuch a deſolation as has not happened to any other people. When he looked forward to ſucceeding ages, what did he behold? He ſaw that the wickedneſs of men was to continue and abound, to erect a Golgotha in every age, and by obſtinate impenitence, to crucify afreſh the Son of God. He ſaw that in his bleſſed name, and under the banners of his croſs, the moſt atrocious crimes were to be committed, the ſword of perſecution to be drawn, the beſt blood of the earth to be ſhed, and the nobleſt ſpirits that ever graced the world to be cut off; he ſaw that for many of the human race all the efforts of ſaving mercy were to be defeated; that his death was to be of no avail; that his blood was to be ſhed in vain; that his agonies were to be loſt, and that it had been happy for them, if he had never been born. He ſaw that he was to be wounded in the houſe of his friends; that his name was to be blaſphemed among his own followers; that he was to be diſhonored by the wicked lives of thoſe who called themſelves his diſciples; that one man was to prefer the gains of iniquity, another the blandiſhments of pleaſure, a third the indulgence of malicious deſire, and all of you, at times, the gratification of your favorite paſſion, to the tender mercies of the God of peace, and the dying love of a crucified Redeemer. While the hour revolved that ſpread forth all theſe things before his eyes, we need not wonder that he began to be in agony, and that he ſweated as it were great drops of blood.

On the croſs that agony returned, and was redoubled. Judge of what he felt, by the expreſſions of the Prophet in the myſtical pſalm, "My God, my God,

" why haſt thou forſaken me, why art thou ſo far " from helping me, and from the words of my " roaring ? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but " thou heareſt not, and in the night-ſeaſon I am not " ſilent. Our fathers truſted in thee ; they truſted, " and thou didſt deliver them. But I am a worm, " and no man, a reproach of men, and deſpiſed of " the people. I am poured out like water. My " heart is melted like wax in the midſt of my " bowels ; thou haſt brought me to the duſt of " death."

This conſtituted what the ancient church called the *unknown ſufferings* of Chriſt. In the cup which the father gave him to drink, there was ſomething ſharper than the vinegar, and more bitter than the gall. The darkneſs which at that time covered the face of the earth, was but a faint emblem of that blacker cloud which overwhelmed his ſoul. What the degree of theſe unknown ſufferings was, how they were inflicted, or how they were ſuſtained, we cannot tell. But the complaint of dereliction which the Saviour then uttered, the ſenſe which all nature had of its Creator riſing in wrath, when the earth trembled, the rocks were rent aſunder, and the grave gave up its dead, teſtify that they were ſuch as God only could inflict, and the Son of God only could ſuſtain.

Never was there ſorrow like unto this ſorrow wherewith the Lord now chaſtened him in the day of the fierceneſs of his anger. Upon his agony in the garden, an angel from heaven ſtrengthened him. But in this hour, when he bore the ſins of his people, when the pangs of death took hold of him, when

the ſorrows of hell encompaſſed him; in this hour of unutterable wo, where were the heavenly meſſengers, and where was the countenance of his Father, which uſed to comfort him, and to ſmile upon him? Alas! from his Father proceeded thoſe very ſufferings, the ſevereſt of all which he was now experiencing. From him came the cup of trembling, which he was now doomed to drink, and the vials of vengeance which were now poured upon his head. Abandoned and ſmitten, and overwhelmed, he cried out, "My God, my God! why haſt *thou* "forſaken me?"

The meaſure of his wo was now full: the ſufferings of Chriſt were completed. Before he bowed the head and yielded up the ghoſt, he looked up to the heavens, and ſaw the darkneſs diſappearing from before the throne of God. Filled with celeſtial ſatisfaction, "Father," ſaid he, "into thy hands I now "commit my ſpirit." There was but one pang more. The laſt cloud was vaniſhing from the ſky, and all was to be ſerene for ever.

From ſuch a ſubject, Chriſtians, what ſentiments ariſe in your breaſts, and what reflections ought we to conclude with? How is the condition of our Redeemer now changed! From a ſcene of terror and diſtreſs, he is exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty in the heavens. As the ſun broke out from the eclipſe which it then ſuffered, ſo did the light of his Father's countenance open his ſoul. Shame, and ſorrow, and ſuffering, were ſucceeded by glory, and victory, and triumph.

What conſolation does not this yield to Chriſtians in all their afflictions! The high prieſt under the

Law was taken from among men, that he might have compaſſion on the ignorant, and on thoſe who were out of the way; for that he himſelf was alſo compaſſed with infirmity. So likewiſe "we have "not a High Prieſt who cannot be touched with the "feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points "tempted like as we are, but without ſin." "It be-"hoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that "he might be a merciful and faithful High Prieſt, "in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation "for the ſins of the people: for in that he himſelf "hath ſuffered, being tempted, he is able to ſuccour "them that are tempted."

I ſhall conclude with another reflection. Perſons of humane and compaſſionate feelings, when they hear the account of their Saviour's ſufferings, are apt to be moved with pity for his diſtreſſes, and to be actuated with indignation againſt his enemies. But theſe paſſions, in the preſent caſe, my brethren, are miſapplied. "Weep not for me, ye daughters of "Jeruſalem," ſaid our Lord, when in the midſt of his ſufferings. Theſe ſufferings were not intended to excite the ſighs of ſenſibility, and the tears of diſtreſs. Sympathy is not the proper return for his love. His ſufferings are the objects of your faith, and ought to awaken your gratitude. Neither vent your wrath againſt the enemies and the crucifiers of your Saviour. Look inwards, O man! ſearch thine own boſom: There dwell the murderers of thy Lord. Thy ſins, thy crimes, thine unhallowed deſires and unmortified paſſions were the actors in that dreadful ſcene. The Jews and Romans were but inſtruments in *their* hands: but the feeble executioners of that

wrath which *they* provoked and drew down. On theſe, therefore, exhauſt thy vengeance: bring forth thoſe enemies of thy Saviour, and ſlay them before his eyes.

How will it affect the mind with contrition and godly ſorrow, when, on this ſolemn occaſion, you call up your paſt ſins to your remembrance! How will it grieve you to think, as one by one they paſs before you in review, that each of them added a pang to your Saviour's agony, and formed the bitter ingredients of that cup which he drank! Will not this conſideration break your covenant with death, and diſannul your agreement with hell? Can you ever again cheriſh thoſe ſins in your heart, which not only crucified the Lord of glory upon Mount Calvary, but which even now crucify him afreſh, and put him to open ſhame?

But, Chriſtians, I hope better things of you. On this occaſion, let me beſeech you, by the ſufferings of your crucified Redeemer, to break off your iniquities by repentance. Reſolve ſincerely, by the grace of God, to live no longer in ſin. Finally, implore the aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit, to renew your wills, and purify your ſouls. Then may ye rejoice in this the day of your ſolemnity, and be welcome gueſts at the table of the Lord. Then ſhall ye be joyfully invited to the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb. Then ſhall Jeſus manifeſt himſelf to you in the breaking of bread. He ſhall ſay unto your ſouls, "Be of good "cheer, thy ſins are forgiven thee;" and inſpire into you the well-grounded hope of ſitting down with him at his table above, where in his preſence ye ſhall rejoice for evermore. Which may God grant, and to his name be the praiſe!—Let us pray.

EVENING SERMON.

MATTHEW xxviii. 6.

Come, ſee the place where the Lord lay.

WHEN our Saviour expired upon the croſs, the cauſe of Chriſtianity ſeemed to be loſt. Rejected by that nation to whom he was ſent, condemned under the forms of a legal trial, and crucified as a malefactor before all the people, an effectual bar ſeemed to have been put for ever to all his deſigns. It then ſeemed that all was over. A people whom their prophets taught to look for a king, did not look for him to come down from a croſs; a nation who expected the appearance of a Meſſiah, did not expect him to appear from the grave. His followers were few in number, and feeble in ſpirit. Although he had frequently foretold his death, the idea of a temporal prince was ſo ſtrong in their minds, that they could not reconcile themſelves to the thought of a ſuffering Saviour; and though he had alſo on various occaſions foretold his reſurrection, they were ſo much under the power of prejudices, deeply rooted, that they either did not underſtand, or did not believe, his predictions. When he was apprehended by a band of ſoldiers, they forſook him and fled; they had not courage to attend him in the laſt hour of his life; to go with him to the tribunal and to the

croſs: afar off only, they followed with their eyes, and beheld with tears, him whom they expected to behold no more. Then they gave up all for loſt. The ſun, which was ſoon after darkened by a preternatural eclipſe, and the rock which was rent aſunder by an earthquake, appeared to be the ſad tokens of a glory that had departed, and of a kingdom that was to be no more.

Dark and diſmal were the ſhades of that night which deſcended on the Saviour's tomb: the hearts of the diſciples were troubled, and their Comforter was gone. All the ſcenes of their paſt lives, the miracles they had ſeen, the diſcourſes they had heard, the hopes they had entertained, were like a dream; they abandoned themſelves to deſpair, and, as we learn from the Evangeliſt Luke, they were about to leave Jeruſalem, and betake themſelves to their old employments.

While the enemies of Jeſus triumphed, and his friends lamented, the counſels of heaven were executing, and the operation of the Almighty was going forward. We read in the Goſpel of Matthew—
"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn to-
"wards the firſt day of the week, came Mary Mag-
"dalene, and the other Mary, to ſee the ſepulchre.
"And behold, there was a great earthquake; for
"the angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, and
"came and rolled back the ſtone from the door,
"and ſat upon it. His countenance was like light-
"ning, and his raiment white as ſnow. And for
"fear of him, the keepers did ſhake, and became as
"dead men. And the angel anſwered and ſaid un-
"to the women, Fear not ye: For I know that ye

" ſeek Jeſus, which was crucified. He is not here: " For he is riſen, as he ſaid: Come, ſee the place " where the Lord lay."

The nativity of our Lord had been announced by an angel to the ſhepherds of Bethlehem. " While " they were abiding in the field, and keeping watch " over their flocks by night, Lo, the angel of the " Lord came unto them, and the glory of the Lord " ſhone round about them; and the angel ſaid unto " them, Fear not, for behold I bring unto you glad " tidings of great joy, which ſhall be unto all peo- " ple; for unto you is born this day, in the city of " David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord." In like manner, his ſecond nativity, his reſurrection to a new life, was here announced by an angel. What emotions would ariſe in the minds of theſe miniſters of heaven, who had attended him through his life, we cannot tell: this only we know, that " into theſe " things they deſire to look." Much more then doth it become us to contemplate the life and death and reſurrection of our Lord; for he took not on him the nature of angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham. Chriſtians! you have this day beheld your Saviour ſet forth crucified among you; let us now contemplate him as ariſing from the dead, and appearing in glory: you have already ſat at the foot of the croſs, and I hope reaped benefit from the commemoration of your Redeemer's paſſion; let me now carry you to the tomb, to behold " the place " where the Lord lay."

Behold then, in the *firſt* place, in the reſurrection of your Lord, the proof that the redemption of the world is accompliſhed.

Our ſalvation is every where aſcribed in Scripture, to the death and paſſion of our Saviour. As our great High Prieſt, he made an atonement for the ſins of the world upon the croſs; his death was our redemption, and his blood the ranſom that was paid for the ſoul: but his reſurrection was the proof, that the ſacrifice which he offered up was accepted by God, and that the price which he paid, was available for our recovery. By his ſuffering unto death, we were freed from condemnation; but our freedom was not made manifeſt till he aroſe from the grave. His reſurrection then is the baſis of the whole Chriſtian inſtitution, and the ground of our faith and of our hope in him. That Chriſt appeared on earth as a Great Prophet; that he paſſed his days in inſtructing and reforming the world; and that after a life of eminent and exemplary goodneſs, he died the death of a malefactor, was common to him and others, whom God had raiſed up to be the lights of the world, and patterns to mankind. Thus the prophets of old were perſecuted and deſtroyed by ſundry kinds of death; thus the martyrs, ſince the time of our Lord, were cut off in a cruel and ignominious manner: but in *their* deaths there was no expiation for ſin; the blood of the prophets and of the martyrs ſpoke no ſuch language; their blood cried, indeed, to heaven—not for mercy, but for vengeance againſt a guilty world. If Chriſt had died like one of them, and been heard of no more, how ſhould we have believed that his death had atoned to the penitent, for all the blood that had been ſhed from the foundation of the world? How ſhould we have believed that the whole earth had obtained re-

miſſion of ſin from God, by deſtroying one prophet more? Although he had declared, that he was to be offered up as a ſacrifice, and to give his life a ranſom for many, if he had never appeared again, How ſhould we have known that the ſacrifice was accepted, or that the ranſom was paid? The natural concluſion then to be drawn was, that his labours had been in vain. Then might we have ſaid with the diſciples, who were going to Emmaus, "We truſted "that it had been He who was to have redeemed Iſ-"rael;" but now all our hopes are buried in his grave. When he burſt the bands of death, and roſe victorious from the tomb, then it was manifeſt to all, that he had finiſhed the work which the Father gave him to do. For if he had not accompliſhed his undertaking, and expiated the ſins of the world, he had never been releaſed from the priſon of the grave. When he aroſe, therefore, and brought back with him the pardon which he had ſealed with his blood; when, inſtead of executing wrath upon his enemies, he ſent again the offer of peace and reconciliation, and took upon himſelf to be their Interceſſor, as he had already been their ſacrifice, what room was there to doubt of the efficacy of his death, the efficacy of which was ſo undeniably confirmed by his reſurrection?

Here, therefore, we hail the completion of that plan by which the world was to be redeemed; here we rejoice over the finiſhing of the new heavens and new earth, wherein righteouſneſs is to dwell, and come to the cloſe of the celeſtial ſong, which aſcribed glory to God in the higheſt, peace upon the earth, and good-will towards men. Now we may

join in the triumphant language of the apoſtle, "It "is God that juſtifieth, Who is he that condemneth? "It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen, who "is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh "interceſſion for us." As if he had ſaid, "Who "can condemn thoſe whom God hath juſtified, and "for whom Chriſt hath died? Our great High Prieſt "hath now offered up the ſacrifice which was requi- "ſite for the redemption of the world. The wrath "of God is atoned; the guilt of ſin is taken away; "peace is made between God and man; and there "is joy in heaven over the world of the redeemed." That this ſacrifice was acceptable and meritorious in the ſight of God, he hath teſtified unto all men, by raiſing his Son from the dead, by exalting him to his own right hand, and committing to him the ſceptre of Providence, to rule and govern for the good of his Church.

In the *ſecond* place, Chriſtians, behold your Saviour at his reſurrection, entering into his glory.

His firſt appearance was not diſtinguiſhed by marks of greatneſs or ſplendour. The wiſe men who came from the eaſt to worſhip the King of the Jews, expected not to find him a babe at Bethlehem, lying in a manger. Deſcended of humble parents, and born in a mean condition, he paſſed his early life in obſcurity, and in the labours of poverty. What the Prophet calls the "ſtem from Jeſſe," was, at its firſt appearance, but a root out of a dry ground; it had no form nor comelineſs, for which it could have been deſired. Hitherto it had been only unknown and obſcure; and at the time of his appearing unto Iſrael, he was a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief.

But even while he ſtood forth in the power of the Lord, and confirmed his miſſion by the miracles which he wrought, the oppoſition to him increaſed, and every act of charity he did to others, became a new ſource of miſery to himſelf. During this time in which he went about doing good to all the ſons of men, he had not where to lay his head. When he caſt out devils, he was immediately charged with being in league with the prince of them. When he ſat with publicans and ſinners, he was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. When he healed the ſick of their infirmities, and forgave their ſins, then was he called a blaſphemer, and an encroacher on the prerogative of God. When he reſtored the withered hand, and cured the blind or the lame on the Sabbath-day, then is he no longer fit to live. Theſe were ſuch offences as nothing but his death could expiate. And to death at laſt they brought him. He is betrayed by one of his own diſciples, and carried to judgment. He is charged with the moſt opprobrious crimes. In cruel ſport they pay him the mock honors of a prince; they crown him with thorns; they put a reed into his hand; they bow the knee before him, and, with profane and impious deriſion, cry, "Hail King of the Jews." And that nothing might be wanting, to ſhow how much he was deſpiſed and rejected of men, the queſtion was put between him and a murderer, which ſhould be releaſed; and with one voice, the people anſwered, "Releaſe unto us Barabbas." He was then nailed to the accurſed tree, and died the death of a malefactor.

And is this the Meſſiah whom the Jews expected,

and whom the prophets had foretold? Is this He, concerning whom Iſaiah had propheſied, "Unto us "a Son is born, unto us a Child is given, and his "name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the "Mighty God, the Everlaſting Father, the Prince of "Peace?" Is this he who was to raiſe up the tabernacle of David; who was to repair the deſolations of many ages; who was to ſit upon the throne of Zion, extend his dominion from ſea to ſea, and from the river to the ends of the earth? Yes, it is he! But, as the Scriptures foretold, he muſt ſuffer before he enter into his glory. Hence, ſaith the ſame Prophet, when he ſhall be ſtricken for the tranſgreſſion of the people, and make his ſoul an offering for ſin, then he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. At his reſurrection, the propheſies of the Old Teſtament are underſtood, and the ſcandal of the croſs is wiped away. The hiſtory of the man of ſorrows ends, and the Lord of Glory appears. A brighter train of years begins, and a new era of happy time revolves. From the cloud which had concealed him long, he now iſſues forth in the beauties of immortality; from the veil which had obſcured him in the days of his fleſh, the ſplendour of his divinity now ſhines forth; celeſtial rays circle and diſtinguiſh his head; and he appears to be the Son of God with power, when he comes in triumph from the tomb, having ſubdued the powers of death, and leading captivity captive. He now ſees the travail of his ſoul, and is ſatisfied; he enters on the joy that was ſet before him; and has all power committed to him in heaven and in earth.

In the *third* place, Chriſtians, behold in the reſur-

rection of your Lord, your nature reſtored to its original dignity.

Man was at firſt made after the image of God, clothed with the robe of innocence, and crowned with the honors of immortality. There was no diſcord among the principles of his frame; no darkneſs in his mind, and no diſorder in his heart. Happy and harmonious was the temper of his ſoul. Order, the great law of heaven, was alſo the law of man. He had a paradiſe without, and a fairer paradiſe within. But by his diſobedience and fall he became a different perſon: his nature was degraded, and his dignity was loſt. He who was the Lord of the inferior world, and was inveſted with dominion over the works of nature, was now ſunk into a ſtate little ſuperior to the beaſts that periſh. This change was the death of the man whom God had created; the divine life was no more; the image of God lay buried under the ruins of iniquity. Hence the human form in Scripture is called a "body of death;" and the world is ſaid to be "dead in treſpaſſes and "ſins." But as by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection to life. As in Adam all die, ſo in Chriſt all are made alive. "The creature was "made ſubject to vanity, not willingly." We conſented not to the degradation of our nature; and he who ſubjected us in hope hath reſtored us again. Chriſt roſe as the repreſentative of all his people; as the Leader of an innumerable multitude who ſhall follow him into the heavens. Hence we are ſaid in Scripture to be begotten again by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead; to be made alive with Chriſt; to be riſen with him; and ſit with him in heavenly

places. Here then you behold your nature riſing anew from the tomb of Chriſt; fair as when it firſt came from the hands of the Creator, when he ſaw his own image, and pronounced it good. Here you behold it riſing with additional honor: made at firſt a little lower than the angels, it was aſſumed by one who was greater than they, and is now dignified in heaven by him before whoſe throne the angels of God worſhip.

In the *laſt* place, Chriſtians, behold in the reſurrection of Chriſt, the proof and the earneſt of your own reſurrection.

Our Saviour not only taught the immortality of the ſoul, but alſo the reſurrection of the body. This doctrine was new to the world, and contrary to the obſervation of mankind; for there is nothing in the whole compaſs of nature, that yields a ſimilitude to duſt and aſhes riſing up again into organiſed bodies, and to perpetual life. It required therefore a proof of a particular kind, which it obtained; for as a proof that the dead were to ariſe, our Saviour aroſe from the dead. Hence God is ſaid to have given aſſurance to all men of the general reſurrection, by raiſing his Son from the dead. This ſubject is handled profeſſedly, and at great length, by the Apoſtle Paul, in a moſt eloquent diſcourſe to the Corinthians, part of which I ſhall now read to you. 1 Cor. xv. 20, 21, 22, 23. "But now is Chriſt riſen from the "dead, and became the firſt fruits of them that ſlept. "For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo "the reſurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all "die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive. But "every man in his own order: Chriſt the firſt-fruits; "afterwards they that are Chriſt's, at his coming."

In the times of the apoſtle, this doctrine was more felt than it is now; a ſtrong impreſſion of immortality did then animate the diſciples of Jeſus. From whence, but from this doctrine, proceeded the zeal and ſpirit of the primitive Chriſtians, who embraced the religion of Jeſus at the expenſe of all that was dear, and at the peril of their lives. The ſword of the perſecutor had no terrors, when they ſaw it ſucceeded by a crown of glory. When they looked on the ſhore of bliſs and immortality, they trembled not, though they knew they had to ſwim through a ſea of blood. Even when death was before their eyes, their hearts ſprung with joy, and their hopes began to bloom. Not the frown of the tyrant, nor the face of the king of terrors, nor the executioner that thirſted for blood, could rob them of their peace. They looked upon theſe as meſſengers ſent by Providence, to carry them to that better world where their hearts long to be. This was the armour by which the ſaints and martyrs overcame the world; by which they triumphed over pain, and ignominy, and death, and looked upon fires, and racks, and gibbets, upon every engine of torture, and every form of diſſolution, as ſo many doors opening into the kingdom of glory. They were invincible, becauſe they knew they were immortal.

From the doctrines which have been now laid down, let us conclude with ſome inferences and reflections.

Chriſtians, you are the diſciples of a riſen Redeemer. As we glory in his croſs and paſſion, let us alſo rejoice in his reſurrection. The diſciples were glad when they ſaw their Lord reſtored to life again;

and the firſt Chriſtians conſidered it as ſuch a joyful event, that they uſed to greet one another with this ſalutation, "Chriſt is riſen." He who was once dead, is now alive, and lives for evermore. He hath removed the terror and the ſting of death; he hath hallowed the grave as a place of reſt for all his followers, and riſen as the Forerunner of the faithful, who ſhall riſe to eternal life. He left the veſtments of mortality behind him. Death hath no more dominion. And if ye be riſen with Chriſt, put off the old man and his affections; let ſin have no more dominion over you; walk in newneſs of life. As you have ſet out in the paths of righteouſneſs, continue your courſe therein. Religion was not intended for extraordinary occaſions. Holineſs is not a robe which you can put off and on at pleaſure. You muſt never lay aſide the wedding garment. Tranſient emotions which you may now feel, will not change the heart. Starts and ſallies of goodneſs which you may now experience, will not form the character. The temper of the mind, and the tenor of the life are all in all. When religion and virtue have been matured by time, and grown into habit, then we can pronounce them to be ſincere and genuine. Let him that is righteous then, be righteous ſtill. Let him that is holy, be holy ſtill. Let the ſpirit of this day accompany you all the days of your lives. Carry into the world, into the buſineſs and into the pleaſures of the world, the purity of this ordinance, the diſpoſitions you now feel, and the purpoſes you now form. Be faithful unto death, and God will give you the crown of life. Further, As ye have gained the victory over death,

through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, therefore be aſſured, that a life of faith and duty will effectually conduct you to happineſs. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Miſerable indeed would be the condition of the human kind; feeble would be our efforts, and few our attainments, if after a well-ordered life, we were obliged to ſit down with the ſad confeſſion, that virtue was but an empty name; that we had cleanſed our hands in vain, and purified our hearts to no purpoſe. But, Chriſtians, our labour ſhall not be in vain; our works of faith and love, our exertions of magnanimity, our efforts of patience in the cauſe of goodneſs; the tender offices of humanity, charity, and pity, that we have performed, the kind diſpoſitions that we have cheriſhed or improved, the upright intentions which we have maintained, even the ſilent aſpirations of a good heart, the warm wiſhes of the benevolent, for the happineſs of the human kind, are now well-pleaſing in the ſight of God. We know, even from our own experience, that there is a reward for the righteous. Never have we done a good deed, but we have obtained the gratulations of our own conſcience, and enjoyed the triumph of the mind.

Let the wicked call upon the mountains to overwhelm, and the rocks to hide them in the day of the Lord. Let infidels look for the ſhades of annihilation to conceal them, and the curtains of the dark night to be drawn around them for ever. Better proſpects are preſented to us. The hope of immor-

tality is ſet before us, and heaven opens its everlaſting gates to receive us to its manſions.

Becauſe of this our heart is glad, and our glory rejoiceth. The Everlaſting Father will not leave us in the grave, nor ſuffer his holy ones to ſee corruption. He hath ſhewed us the path of life. In his preſence there is fulneſs of joy, and at his right hand there are pleaſures for evermore. Know then thyſelf, O man! Make thyſelf acquainted with thy future ſtate. Enter early, my brethren, upon your eternal life; and now think, and act, and live, as the heirs of immortality. Implore the Divine goodneſs to give you the ſpirit of that better country to which you tend, and to bleſs you with a foretaſte of the joys which are to come. And in the ſtrength of Heaven, go forth from this aſſembly, immortal; go forth into the world, the ſons of God, the heirs of heaven, candidates for a crown of glory which fadeth not away. Then you will have good cauſe to remember this day, as one of the days of the right hand of the Moſt High, and to endleſs ages you will bleſs the time when you retired from the vanities of the world, and learned to meditate at your Saviour's tomb.

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the ſheep, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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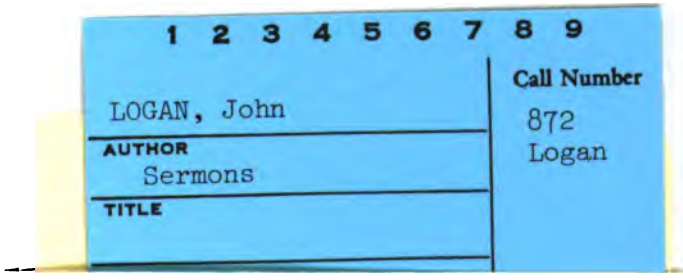
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